

Fannina W. Halle

WOMEN IN THE SOVIET EAST

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

Margaret M. Green

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If a true believer seeks counsel, let him ask the Mullah; if the latter is absent, then his father, his elder brother, his uncle, his neighbour; but if nobody is at hand, then let him ask his wife, and follow the contrary course.

Oriental Proverb.

You see, I am one of the cooks of whom Lenin said that they must learn to guide the State.

From a conversation with the "City Manageress" of Tashkent.

PREFACE

THE KIND RECEPTION ACCORDED TO MY BOOK ON *Women in Soviet Russia*, which appeared at the end of 1932, encouraged me in the intention I had already conceived of investigating the position of women in the non-Russian, eastern territories of the Soviet Union. Quite apart from the technical impossibility, it seemed to me better for practical reasons to describe separately two aspects of the same historical process which, though they coincided in date, were yet different in character—the process actually accomplished in the Soviet Union of equalizing the position of men and women.

The fundamental difference lies in the fact that the Russian women were Europeans, who had been seized by the current of western culture long before the October Revolution and the World War, indeed, in the middle of the nineteenth century, and had often played a leading part in the general emancipation of women, whilst the women of the Russian East took part in a movement which started with elemental force after the end of the World War in *almost all* the hitherto intensely patriarchal peoples of the East.

For it is no accident that almost simultaneously in Turkey, in Persia, in Afghanistan, and in other countries, the women of Islam were roused and endeavoured to break completely with a past unworthy of human beings, hitherto forced upon them, with the slavish life they had led for centuries. Undoubtedly the war, but no less the great social upheavals and changes that followed it, prepared the ground for what was to come.

But naturally the speed of the process differed very much in different countries.

The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, with its tendency towards social equalization that was particularly vigorous at first, did much to hasten the process of equalization of the sexes. Nevertheless, it is not only here that we must look for the great contrast to the parallel process in the non-Soviet countries. For amongst the millions of women, for the most part Mohammedan, in the Soviet East we have a *threefold* emancipation: as belonging to their nation, to their social class, and to their sex. And, moreover, without restriction to a relatively small upper class, a regenerative mass movement embracing all classes from the bottom upwards, a real uprising of the masses. And it really is a transformation in a single night from a creature hardly distinguishable from a domestic animal to a full member of the community, self-reliant and conscious of her strength, progressive and capable of development; it is a true attainment of human stature, a new creation.

What confronts us, then, is a phenomenon that places immense masses of women in the foremost ranks of the "Europeanization" and emancipation of the East, the mobilization of vast forces, hitherto passive, which promise wholly new contributions to the enrichment of human culture, and we must recognize its bearing as gigantic, its significance as worldwide. And, whatever may have occurred in the past two decades in the immense territories of the Soviet Union, stretching across two continents—whatever attitude one may assume towards it—the fact remains that reconstruction is nowhere more clearly to be seen; nowhere is the gulf between yesterday and to-day wider. One thing, therefore, is now placed beyond question: a new leaf has been turned in the history of the ancient continent of Asia, and half of it at least will be written by the awakening women of the Russian East.

In this sense, then, we are doubtless justified in detaching the liberation of women in the Soviet East from the complex whole—alike from that of European Russia and that of women in the non-Russian East—and treating it separately.

In this book I shall endeavour to show in what manner, and on what historical foundation, under what conditions and with what success in each separate case, the transformation of women in the Soviet East has hitherto been accomplished. In the present book, unlike its predecessor, it has been impossible to attempt, much less achieve, any exhaustive description, in view of the extreme variety of the material. I have been obliged, therefore, to trace the main lines of development in the various territories of the Soviet East, which is inhabited by *nearly two hundred peoples*, and to report on the state of affairs up to the end of 1936.

The material treated in the following pages, of which no systematic study has hitherto appeared, has been drawn from very many sources, and it has often been necessary to devote much labour to testing their reliability, since many questions had either not been raised at all previously, or had been treated in a thoroughly uncritical way. But I have also drawn from my own experience, acquired on repeated lengthy journeys in recent years, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus, journeys which often brought me to exceedingly remote spots, to the Persian, Afghan, and Chinese frontiers, and not far from the Indian frontier; some of these places are, as a rule, barely accessible to Western Europeans.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the many scientific and cultural authorities and institutes in Moscow, Leningrad, Baku, Tiflis, Makhach-Kala, Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Ferghana, Ashqabad, Merv, and Stalinabad, and to their branches in many other places, which cannot be enumerated here, and further to all those persons who frequently gave me the most friendly

and generous assistance. More especially I thank the *Voks* (Society for Cultural Relations of the Soviet Union with Foreign Countries), which was always most kind in securing for me the opportunity of getting into contact with all the requisite authorities, and of investigating, extending, and improving my material.

I owe, further, warm thanks to Dr. Andreas Gasper, of Vienna, who has rendered me the most valuable help in sifting and arranging the material.

FANNINA HALLE

Vienna, August, 1937

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WOMEN IN THE SOVIET EAST

INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL HISTORY

THE SOVIET EAST BEGINS IN MOSCOW

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE SOVIET EAST? FIRST AND foremost, an area of nearly six million square miles, that is to say, no less than three-quarters of the total area of the Soviet Union; a territory large enough to embrace the three large European States, England, France, and Germany, twelve times over and the whole of Europe outside Russia five times.

Starting round about the middle reaches and the mouth of the Volga, where it flows into the Caspian Sea, and in the autonomous Republics and Regions of the Chuvashes, Tatars, and Kalmucks, the Soviet East extends across the Ural Mountains southwards, south-eastwards, and north-eastwards. On this side of the Caspian Sea it embraces the whole Caucasus, and beyond it the whole of Central Asia (formerly Turkistan), Northern Asia, and the Soviet Russian Far East. And whilst its frontiers to the south-west are those of Persia and Afghanistan, and to the south and south-east those of Mongolia and Manchukuo, in the far north-east its borders are beyond the Arctic Circle, and in the east the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Geographically, that is the Soviet East.

Ethnographically, indeed, the Soviet East begins in Moscow, that focal point of the Union situated in Europe; in Moscow, where not only does every shoe-black at every street corner claim to be an Ajsor

(the Aisors declare that they are the descendants of the ancient Assyrians, some of whom immigrated to the Caucasus), where not only does every fourth or fifth person, whether man or woman, with or without the *ryuberyika* (a little embroidered cap especially in use in Central Asia), present Mongolian features, but where almost every one of the near two hundred nationalities in the Soviet Union has its own colony nowadays and its own representatives, to say nothing of the Soviet of Nationalities which, side by side with the Union Soviet, corresponds to the Second Chamber in a western Parliament.

Further, all these nationalities have had their own university in Moscow for more than fifteen years, the *Kuv* (short for Communist University of the Labouring East), with its thousand students gathered from no less than eighty nationalities. And in all the other university institutes in Moscow there is a considerable percentage of students from the East. They have their own hostels and convalescent homes, newspapers and journals, their own libraries and picture galleries, theatres and restaurants, their own societies and clubs for music and dancing, for the several arts and other purposes; their advanced courses in pedagogy; a Central Committee of the Peoples for the New (Latin) Alphabet; a Central Committee of the Peoples of the (Asiatic) North. In Leningrad there is further a model institute of research and instruction for the peoples of the Asiatic North, in which the representatives of twenty-six nationalities are studying; a special Museum of Eastern Culture; a Museum of the Peoples of the Soviet Union; and other like museums and collections.

The Union of Authors of the Soviet East forms a special intellectual centre in Moscow; many of these call the great Persian epic poet Firdausi, the author of *Shahnama*, their spiritual master. Their task is not only to translate the most recent literature of the East into Russian, but also to collect the most ancient, orally

transmitted, literature of their peoples and make it accessible to the general public. In a word, this residential centre of the Eurasian continent, with a daily increasing population of already four million, presents within its venerable walls such a monumental collection of curious peoples from the Asiatic cradle of mankind, some still vigorous, some until recently in process of dying out, a collection so organically bound up with itself, as would be inconceivable elsewhere. And further proof that we really are at the centre of a union of states inhabited by countless nationalities may be found in the innumerable national delegations, members of conferences, guests, men and women, often even children, from the remotest parts of the Soviet East, feeling more at home every day in the Moscow Kremlin, their central metropolis.

Moscow: the town with the most extraordinary curiosities, with boundless possibilities, and contrasts that strike us perpetually; a powerful throbbing, living symbol of the forces, for the most part unexploited as yet, and the violent contrasts whose cause lies deeply rooted in the natural structure of the whole vast territory of the Soviet Union.

That territory, that vast expanse, is bounded on one side by the lower spurs of the highest mountain range in the world, the Hindu Kush, the Tien Shan, and the Pamir Plateau—the so-called “roof of the world.” (Here, by the way, a hitherto unknown mountain, the Pique Stalin, was discovered in 1932, some 24,600 feet in height, that is 6,500 feet higher than what had hitherto been accounted the highest mountain in the Union.) At the other extreme we find nothing but boundless steppes, burning deserts, gloomy primeval forests, taiga, and tundra that is covered with ice almost all the year round, nothing but snow and sky. North of the Aral Sea, in Central Asia, it is colder in January than in Moscow or Leningrad. But in summer temperatures are registered of from 113 to 122 degrees

Fahrenheit, which occur otherwise only in the Sahara, in Arabia, and at the Equator.

And just as the climate of the country is full of contrasts, so are the fauna and flora. Whilst oranges ripen in the south of the Union, and there are tea plantations, besides active encouragement now given to the cultivation of pineapples, in the north the ground hardly thaws more than a foot deep for the greater part of the summer. Whilst in the north the people carve with exquisite art the mammoth bones that are found in quantities, whilst they celebrate, "wild reindeer or bear festivals," and the oldest festival in the world, that of "the resurrection of the animals," travel with dog teams, profess Shamanism, and see the world full of good and evil spirits, in Turkmenia, Uzbekistan, the Kirghiz Republic, and Kazakhstan, nomad or semi-nomad tribes range the sunburnt deserts of Inner Asia in endless trains of camel caravans with their tents and herds, their wives and children, and all their earthly possessions. Both are almost without any conception of time; for them it is unlimited, they do not know what to do with it, and space is for them, who know it only in terms of a day's camel ride, a kind of way of killing time.

Nowadays, indeed, these conditions are already being undermined by the wireless; both Arctic man and desert shepherd of the pre-Islamic period find themselves suddenly planted right in the twentieth century; the "giant birds" created by human hands, whose wings clatter with growing frequency above their heads, are already a common and familiar sight to them.

THE ORIENT AND MATRIARCHY

The Soviet East, like all Asia, like the whole East, whether Near or Far, is an alien, exotic land to our European feelings. And so any effort to grasp its alien quality emotionally is far better than all enumerations of names and figures, however systematic.

Once we have realized that, the starting-point of our inquiry presents itself automatically. We may take as such a contrast which is no less historical than the sentiment at the base of it has at all times been vital. Orient and Occident are two worlds which have never been able to comprehend one another fully, between which there has been a tension, breaking out into conflicts of worldwide historical significance, a tension which clearly dates back to the mythical beginnings of history and has often assumed the character of warlike explosions. This, no doubt, was chiefly because the tension between the two worlds, or rather half-worlds, which found its subjective expression in the impossibility of mutual understanding, also represented the polarity of two opposing principles striving for reconciliation.

Hitherto we have been able to elucidate the nature of the worldwide, historical tension between East and West only through the suggestive divination of a creative view of history. Such a view is associated with the name of *J. J. Bachofen* and the epoch-making theory of matriarchy which he developed. In the light of this theory—though, indeed, it is out of date in much of its detail—the ancient cleavage between East and West ceases altogether to be a riddle, that cleavage which has driven Europe again and again to hostile attack upon Asia since the early days of antiquity. It is presented as the dialectic antithesis between two stages in the evolution of human society: an earlier epoch, venerable through its close contact with nature, which placed woman and motherhood in the centre of human life, and conceded to woman a dominant influence on the family and law and religion, and a later social system which transferred the predominant position in all fields of social life from woman to man. And so, since *Bachofen's* researches, it is regarded as a proved fact of the history of early times that the struggle between the older, matriarchal, and the later, patriarchal, principles

is the key to all the mythical and historical traditions dating from the pre-history of the peoples.

The exotic and alien character of the East with which we have started our inquiry, the limits which it places on the sympathetic understanding of the Westerner, the profound difference between the western and eastern worlds, repeatedly breaking out into hostile conflict in the course of past history, all this may be traced to a concrete historical antithesis by means of the theory of matriarchy. The eastern world made the transition from the matriarchal to the more advanced stage of the patriarchal system later and under totally different conditions from those of Europe, whose formal history begins with the appearance of the already patriarchal nations of antiquity.

Whatever our approach to the question of the position of women in the East, we shall always be confronted with two aspects: on the one hand the comparatively prolonged duration of matriarchy, and on the other its supersession by patriarchy, produced by wholly different causes, particularly Islam, and still continuing in unmitigated force. This, if anything, seems to lead most directly to a comprehension of the peculiar position of women in Asia, including the Soviet East with which we are concerned. And so it is hardly surprising that to this very day we find relics of the once dominant matriarchal system, more especially in those parts least touched by Islam, and that particularly in Central Asia the position of women is determined by Islam, whose supporters, mainly Turkish peoples, had *mutatis mutandis* the same historical mission to fulfil as the Roman imperial power in the West: that is, to remodel the life of the community into a patriarchy.

THE CAUCASUS

We will facilitate our survey by dividing the immense area of the Soviet East into three fundamentally separate parts: the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Northern Asia.

In certain respects the Caucasus, the first of these three parts, is likewise the most remarkable. Itself a small continent, it belongs in equal degree to Europe and Asia, for its northern half is reckoned to the former, its southern to the latter, and the dividing line between the two parts is also counted as the frontier between the two continents. That is the Caucasus mountain range, "the skeleton of the Caucasian landscape, the nerve of its inhabitants' flesh and blood."

This little continent between the Black Sea and the Caspian, with its many legends, is unique alike in its landscape, its history, and its ethnology, and richly repays the interest that has always been shown in it. The prime object of interest is a pre-history handed down in the form of myths, although the heroic resistance of the Caucasians to the Russian conquerors in the last century has also found its way into the consciousness of Europe, thanks to Russian romantic literature. And the overwhelming magnificence of the scenery in this "Prince of the Earth," as Lermontov called the Caucasus, where he was three times exiled, calls forth an echo in the minds of cultured Europeans. But all this is of secondary importance compared with the generally admitted significance of the Caucasus in the pre-history of the human race. The strongest and most deeply rooted associations of present-day educated people with the Caucasus have not so much to do with the names of the heroes of freedom sung by Pushkin and Tolstoi, as with the legendary primeval epoch of a much more distant past. Now they cling to the rugged precipices of Elbruz, where Prometheus in chains suffered the penalty of his revolt against the gods, now to the Armenian peak Ararat, which alone, according to the Biblical legend, stood out above the all-destroying Flood and served as a refuge for Noah's ark, with all its human and animals' lives, saved for the sake of a distant future. The Amazons, too, who roused the interest of antiquity, are generally supposed to have had their home in the Caucasus.

The scientific exploration of the Caucasus, dating only from recent decades and now pursued with great energy, especially the study of its hitherto little known languages and peoples, has led to the most remarkable discoveries. Not only has the Caucasus been found to be the home of the Hellenic and Semitic legends which doubtless date back to the earliest times, including those which have found a place in the Bible in a form familiar to us, but these legends correspond exactly to very ancient traditions which we can trace on into a late post-Christian period in the Caucasus. Moreover, the languages of the Caucasus, which were wholly unknown until recently, and have, for the most part, no written characters, throw startling light upon the origin of these legends.

The Caucasian languages which, with the exception of Georgian, had never been studied until our own day, were regarded by European linguists as a separate group, but nothing much could be made out of them. The philologists' positive fear of tackling this awkward subject matter is quite understandable. For the Caucasus, with its countless small tribes living isolated in the mountain valleys, is an ethnographical chaos almost too complex for survey. The three Caucasian Federal Republics, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia, together with the Northern Caucasus and the autonomous Regions contained in it, only designate with their names a small fraction of the peoples inhabiting them, and these are not all genuinely Caucasian, but Turkish, Semitic, and Indo-Germanic as well. The lingual confusion is incomparably greater. In the census carried out by the Soviet Union in 1926 eighty-one peoples with thirty-two different languages were noted in the North Caucasian Republic of Daghestan alone, with a population of barely a million. The early Arabian poet was right who called this Land of Mountains (the translation of the name Daghestan) a Mountain of Tongues. For there are dialects there—the so-called single-*au* languages

—which are spoken in *one* village alone with a mere handful of houses. A real Babel, therefore; for obvious reasons its scientific exploration awaited the coming of a scholar of Caucasian origin, *N. Marr* of Leningrad, who died recently.

Marr called the genuine Caucasian languages Japhetic, and so claimed for them the name of Noah's third son, since the names of the two other brothers, Shem and Ham, already designated two closely cognate lingual groups, the Semitic and the Hamitic. At first Marr assumed not only the lingual, but also the ethnographical, unity of the Caucasian peoples, and spoke accordingly of a Japhetic Caucasus inhabited by Japhetic peoples. Further scientific investigation of the Japhetic languages led to results which, on the one hand, give us fuller information about the question which mainly concerns us here, that of the significance of the Caucasus to Mediterranean culture, in other words, to human culture as a whole, but on the other hand conflict so sharply with deeply rooted beliefs and prejudices of Western European scholarship that we cannot be surprised to find that they are still almost unknown outside the borders of the Soviet Union, except to a few specialists. I will only observe in passing that there are said to be over-hasty conclusions among Marr's observations, conclusions to which he was misled by the novelty of his subject matter; but we are concerned here only with his testimony regarding the significance of the peoples and languages of the Caucasus to Afro-Eurasian culture.

One result of Marr's investigations is, at any rate, firmly established. In the extreme west of Europe, in the Pyrenean peninsula, jammed in between Spain and France, lives a little mountain people with a very ancient civilization and, especially, with its own language: the Basques, who are regarded as the descendants of the Iberian natives of the peninsula. Though they had racked their brains for centuries, scholars could not discover any lingual group in which to place the

Basque tongue; it was necessary to allot a separate group for Basque among the eighteen lingual groups of mankind.

Japhetology solved the riddle of Basque, for it was proved to belong to the Japhetic group, and its nearest kin among the Japhetic languages was discovered in the idiom of the Abkhazians, living along the east of the Black Sea, whom the Greeks called Abascs. Later an eastern branch of the Japhetites was discovered, and it was doubtless no accident that this, too, was a mountaineer fragment of the race: the Vershiks on the Pamir Plateau in Central Asia. Thus a kinship of the Caucasian peoples, dating back to the earliest times, at least in the matter of language has been established with a western mountaineer race, the Basques, and a Central Asian, the Vershiks.

From thence Japhetic research extends to an ever wider horizon, and opens our eyes to chains of association startling in their novelty, and overstepping the limits of philology into the wider field of general history.

Long before Marr, historians regarded it as an established fact that there was a civilization in the Mediterranean area before it was colonized by Indo-Europeans and Hamo-Semites. Even in the middle of the last century the question was raised of a race neither Indo-Germanic nor Hamo-Semite, a mysterious "third ethnical element," of whose existence throughout Afro-Eurasia evidence was repeatedly found in new archæological discoveries. These discoveries, and many more cultural and ethnical facts, offered unanimous testimony of a pre-Hellenic and pre-Roman culture which, as the basic stratum, continued its creative contribution to the formation of the Mediterranean civilization at a time when the Afro-Eurasian area had long been colonized by Indo-Europeans and Hamo-Semites. The area covered by this homogeneous, pre-historic culture turned out to include not only the Mediterranean lands, with all the islands and peninsulas

of southern Europe, especially Cyprus and Crete, but also the whole of Hither Asia and Asia Minor. Its representatives were peoples who have handed principally their names to us in the inscriptions and monuments which are still in part undeciphered. In Asia Minor they were called the Phrygians, Lycians, and Kassites, in Palestine the Philistines, in Spain the Iberians, and in Italy and Greece the Etruscans and Pelasgians.

The next deduction followed automatically. From the point of view of present-day Japhetic scholarship, the Japhetic languages are not the speech of a particular race, but of a certain historical epoch, which can be traced back some eight thousand years, and which possessed a civilization spreading as an unbroken and connected whole over all Afro-Eurasia and even further. These languages, according to Marr, are all "associated by the bond of genetic kinship with the idioms of the modern, ancient, and archaic Caucasus," where they are spoken to this day by mountaineers who have remained isolated for thousands of years. In other words: there must have been a pre-historic period when there lived everywhere peoples with Japhetic languages, peoples whose territory became more and more restricted in the historic period, and was finally confined to the Caucasus, the Basque Pyrenees, and the Pamir. The Japhetic peoples who spoke these languages were not, as I have said, a particular race or type of mankind, but rather the Japhetic tongues denote a definite, pre-historic stage in the development of language.

Thus the extraordinary significance of the Japhetic languages of the Caucasus to present-day philology rests in the fact that in them primitive forms of speech structure, long outgrown in our day, have survived. "The Japhetites have not broken away from the pre-historic basis in their speech structure," says Marr. That is to say: the pre-history of the human race survives in the Japhetic languages of that "linguistic microcosm, the Caucasus."

At the beginning of the period of a few thousand years in which our written history is comprised, three ethnical elements lived in the Afro-Eurasian area: in addition to Indo-Europeans and Hamo-Semites the Japhetites, whose territory once embraced the whole civilized world, but now, at the opening of the historical era, had shrunk to the Caucasus and one or two mountain districts. Thus the worldwide historic struggle of the West against the East represents not only, as Bachofen realized, the fight between patriarchy and matriarchy, it is also the fight of the West, once Japhetic, now overlaid with patriarchal peoples, Greeks and Romans, against the East, where matriarchy and the Japhetic remote antiquity were able to assert themselves much longer.

In this sense, *pre-history or the Japhetic phase of evolution and the matriarchal order must be interchangeable terms.* In the pre-historic Japhetic West, too, inhabited by Iberians, Etruscans, and Pelasgians, matriarchy had prevailed. That is a fact placed beyond question by archæological discoveries. It is most completely proved by the monuments of Cretan Mycenæan culture, familiar to all students of the history of art. In the kingdom of Minos, in the area of Ægean culture, of which it has long been established that it was inhabited by that mysterious "primeval people, neither Semitic nor Indo-Germanic," women occupied a privileged position. Without regarding the results of research into the institution of matriarchy, *H. Th. Bossert* sums up the relations of the sexes as follows, basing his account solely upon archæological discoveries (*Alt-Kreta*):

Women played such a predominant part in the life of those times as never again, perhaps, in the whole course of the thousands of years that we can trace historically. One is really disposed to rate the part played by women in public and private life in those days so high that it even found expression in artistic style. . . . All images of the gods, in so far as they represented human beings, are female figures. Women dedicate themselves to the cult of the

god. Everywhere women meet men on an equal footing. Not only in their own special sphere. They share joy and danger with men. They go hunting alone and fight wild beasts. And if external enemies were not reserved for men, the picture presented would lack nothing of that found in the legend of the Amazons.

What is here stated about ancient Crete is true of the whole area of Japhetic civilization, or, as we should rather say, of the whole Japhetic historical period, the pre-historic era in which Mediterranean civilization took its rise; and so, likewise, of the Caucasus where, as we shall see, relics of matriarchy still survive to the present day.

The heroic resistance of the Caucasus mountain tribes to Tsarist colonization, sung by Russian poets, lends immortality to the unique character of Caucasian history, where the highlands have from the earliest times provided a natural defence for the mountain tribes against alien invaders. For the coastal strip along the seashore near Derbent has always been the gate through which Asia has invaded Europe, and even Alexander the Great is said to have reached Derbent. A new element entered into the resistance to the Russian advance in that it was no longer the struggle of separate tribes, but a real war of freedom. But the love of freedom of the small mountain tribes, the Abasks and Cherkesses, was not sufficient for such an undertaking. It called for a vigour not to be found among the fragmentary Japhetic tribes, such as only an Islamized Caucasus could raise.

Only so can we explain how it came about that the subjection of the Caucasus was not completed till 1864, although its partial conquest began in the early years of the previous century, and even before that; or that the two principal Islamic sects, the Shiites and Sunnites, united, and that the rising, led from the outset by the *Imams*, or priests, found a leader in the person of the

Caucasian national hero, Shamil. He was a man whose personal courage, and whose ability as agitator, politician, and tactician, were beyond question. Nevertheless, it is difficult to join without reserve in the fervent hero-worship with which the Caucasus still regards the fierce and towering grandeur of his person. His coming, and the after all hopeless struggle that he carried on, contributed much to complete the process by which the basic stratum in the Caucasus was buried beneath the later Islamic strata.

After his defeat the Cherkesses, Abasks, and other mountain peoples began to emigrate in hundreds of thousands to European Turkey and Asia, and this process, encouraged and sometimes forced by the Russian conquerors, resulted in the downfall of whole peoples. A chain of burial mounds stretches to the shores of the Black Sea, beneath which slumber Cherkesses who died on their way to Turkey, especially women. The colonization which began in the sixties was rather calculated to disfigure the noble aspect of the "Prince of the Earth," to uproot a living fragment of pre-history. What remained, and how that remnant influenced the position of women until the coming of the Soviets, will be discussed in another chapter.

CENTRAL ASIA

Whereas the religion of Mohammed succeeded only partially in capturing the Caucasus, the second and by far the largest area of the Soviet East became not only Islamic in the course of its history, but also Turkish. The most important, so-called native, peoples of what was formerly Turkistan, the Turkmans, Uzbeks, and their northern neighbours, the Kara-Kalpaks, Kirghiz, and Kazakhs, are all either Turkish peoples, or such as have become Turkish, and, except for the Kazakhs, some of whom are Shamanists, they are uniformly Mohammedans. This double aspect is still characteristic

of the vast area of the Central Asian steppes and tundra. There is no nation whose history is so deeply related to its religion as that of the Turks to Islam. The Arabs and Persians have a pre-Islamic culture; and there are Christian Arabs and Zoroastrian Persians. But we know practically nothing of a pre-Islamic culture of the Turkish peoples. This close connection between nationality and faith explains the pre-eminent part played for centuries by Turkistan in the life of the whole Islamic world.

The steppes of Central Asia seem to have been destined by nature for the true land of the nomad. Only a very small proportion of the soil, which was once the bottom of a sea, is suitable for arable cultivation, and even cotton, now the principal product of Soviet Central Asia, was only introduced by the Tsarist Government. What was formerly Turkistan, the most continental area of the whole earth, with its endless expanse of steppe, is the "land of thirst," the historic battlefield of man pitted against the desert, in short, a typical nomad country, just as its inhabitants are born nomads and long refused to settle in the towns built by the Russians; they were worthy descendants, if only to a small extent the direct offspring, of the nomad peoples who inhabited the districts stretching from the north of the civilized states of Eastern and Western Asia to the steppes of Eastern Europe at the dawn of history. Their home extended far and wide: from Manchuria to the Puszta in Hungary, where there was pasture for cattle and horses.

A flood of countless peoples swept across Central Asia in the course of history. Precisely in the heart of the continent, in the neighbourhood of the Oxus and Jaxartes of the antique world (Amu Darya and Sir Darya), in the Garden of Eden, the Paradise of the earliest of mankind, there have been repeated shiftings and forward thrusts of peoples on an immense scale, with percussions that reached far into the heart of

Europe. But the natural antithesis of oasis and steppe, which outlasted all others and alone determined the course of destiny in Central Asia, provided the same driving motive force in all periods of its varied history. Thus peasants and colonists, elements of settlement, tried again and again to make use of every acre of suitable land by means of skilful irrigation. And again and again the nomads, advancing from the steppes, tried to snatch the treasured possession from them. Either they destroyed the towns, in order to obtain pasture for their herds, or they became the pupils of those whom they had defeated, and their successors.

In this way the mixture of nomad and ancient urban civilization took its rise, that is so exceedingly characteristic of Central Asia. Two centuries before our era Bactria, the ancient country of the Upper Oxus, was known as the "Land of the Thousand Cities." Contemporary Chinese sources mention seventy cities in the Fergana Valley, and Fergana itself is represented as a centre of smithcraft, of the arms industry, and of the manufacture of silk and glass. Trade flourished, too, and an abundant stream flowed between the Central Asian towns, surrounded by walls and inhabited by a feudal class of merchants and warriors, and their slaves. In these cities—oases in the midst of sandy deserts—the Central Asian agricultural aristocracy arose, and the social order of the patriarchal family, whilst the grassy stretches, broken up by mountain chains, were the home of a widespread nomad shepherd population, likewise long before our era. This juxtaposition of economic systems assumes a complex division of labour between shepherd, agricultural, and hunting peoples, and provides again and again the background for the history of Central Asia.

In the thirteenth century arose the Mongol Empire, an historical achievement of robber and warrior nomads that remains to this day almost incomprehensible. This westward movement, too, swept across Central Asia,

gathering for the first and last time in history all the nomad peoples and civilizations of the East, as far as Hither Asia, into one empire under the sway of a single people and a single ruler. And the second great leader of the nomad tribes after Jenghis Khan, Tamburlaine, was born in Samarqand, where he was subsequently to make his capital, and finally to find his last resting-place. And so we have reason to see in the Soviet Central Asia of to-day the original home of the Asiatic nomads against whom settled civilization waged wars of world-wide significance, first from China and then from Russia.

When Russia assumed China's historic mission and began to advance against the nomads in order to push forward her frontiers to those of settled races—the Persians, Afghans, and Chinese—what is to-day Soviet Central Asia had been converted to Islam for a thousand years, and the spread of a Turkish stratum over the original population was also complete. Unlike the Mohammedan countries conquered hitherto, Islam had already attained a high level of civilization at a time long before the Russians, the subsequent masters of the population, were converted to Christianity. In spite of the decadence of Turkistan in the nineteenth century, there were still traces of the once flourishing Arab civilization, and the noble city of Bukhara was regarded as the second Mecca of the Mohammedan world, a centre of Islamic theology, sought not only by would-be scholars throughout Turkistan, but even by Tatars from the Volga. The number of students was estimated at ten thousand. Next to the Turkish Caliphs, the Emirs of Bukhara—genuine despots in the Western sense of the word until the Bolshevik revolution—were the lords of the Mohammedan world, and in the capital ten per cent of the population were Mohammedan clergy.

Nevertheless, Central Asia is in the main a nomad country even to-day, though a peaceful one. Of the native peoples, the Kazakhs and Urotes (Altaians)

are all of them nomads and semi-nomads, and the majority of the Kirghiz and Turkmans. And even among the Uzbeks, who are generally settled, there are semi-nomad tribes, as also in Tajikia. Nomad, too, are the two Mongol peoples furthest west and furthest east, the Kalmucks on the right bank of the Volga, and the Buriats on Lake Baikal in the Far East. All of them combine a nomad habit of life with a complex tribal organization.

It is obvious that the position of women in Soviet Central Asia is largely determined by such factors even at the present day, that it differs among the nomad peoples and among those who are settled, and that even Islam cannot bridge over these differences, much as it has done in other ways to unify customs and even racial types in what was formerly Turkistan. It will be my task to show elsewhere, though it is easily comprehensible, that there are particular varieties of the enslavement of women which are simply incompatible with a nomad life, especially the strict isolation and veiling required by the *Shariat*, the civil law of Islam.

A warlike nomad life definitely favoured the equal rights of the sexes. We have historical evidence that Mongol women took part in Jenghis Khan's campaigns of conquest, not as camp followers, but as vigorous warriors ; girls and boys were taught the use of arms without distinction. Moreover, the Mongols had FEMALE KHANS, whose courage in battle they extolled. Again, the Mongols retained undoubted relics of matriarchy long after Jenghis Khan: marriages were allowed between the son and daughter of the same father, but forbidden between the children of the same mother. That is an institution having sense only in a social order where the father is always regarded as unknown and kinship as possible only on the mother's side. At any rate, nomad women in general, even in those parts of Central Asia where the Islamic contempt for women has taken root most deeply, still enjoy far greater freedom

than their settled sisters, and would not change places with them. The beautiful words in which a Kirghiz woman once described the nomad way of life as a law of nature in conversation with *Hermann Vambéry*, are an expression of contentment, and probably most nomad women still feel the same: "People *must* move about, for don't you see, the moon and the stars, water, animals, birds and fishes all move, and only the dead and the earth lie still." And so it would seem at a superficial glance that the melancholy position of women in the East until the Revolution, in spite of an economic system counteracting their enslavement, was solely due to Islam. For, to quote Vambéry once more: "The non-Mussulman nomads are the best people in the world," and all the evils of Oriental life—including, therefore, the enslavement of women—appear only "where Islam, that terrible bane of social life, has scattered the seeds of its false civilization." It is true that the problem of the connection between Islam and the oppression of women, to which we shall return, is not settled by such general statements.

The conquest of nomad Asia by Tsarist Russia was, moreover, not only incomplete because the population took to a settled life but slowly and to a very small extent, but in another, more concrete sense. It is true that in the south Russia everywhere pushed on to the borders of civilized states with which she could agree upon fixed frontiers, but the frontiers so drawn embraced many areas where the population was nowise conquered, nor even touched by the power of Russia. When not long ago a number of nomad enclaves, with a population of some ten thousand, were discovered in the Turkman desert of Kara Kum, people who had no inkling of being a dependency either of Tsarist Russia, which they had resisted, or of the Soviet power, which had not yet captured them, that was only a startling recent

example of the fact that the incorporation of a district in Tsarist Russia often made little approach to a genuine conquest. In actual fact, a considerable proportion of the territory subjected to the power of Russia, and of the peoples inhabiting it, were never really conquered. That applies most of all to the third component territory of the Soviet East, Northern Asia, and we will conclude this survey with a brief glance at it.

NORTHERN ASIA

Whereas the Caucasus and Central Asia were ancient centres of civilization, inhabited in part, perhaps, by the oldest civilized peoples in the world, we frequently find the most primitive of savage peoples in the north-east of the Union, especially in the Russian Arctic. Just as the steppes of Central Asia pass imperceptibly into the tundra and swamps of the North, so the ethnical composition of the population changes, and strange, unique racial mixtures are found. The principal inhabitants from Eastern Siberia right across the Far East to the shores of the Pacific Ocean are the Evenks, together with other Tungus and Manchu tribes; then the Yakuts, of pure Turkish blood, but not Mohammedans (their territory amounting to over 1,000,000 square miles, is now an autonomous Soviet Republic, but was formerly a notorious place of exile for political offenders), and a number of other tribes, the largest of which in Western Siberia are the Nentsis (formerly Samoyedes), the Khants (Ostiaks), and Mansi (Voguls). There are also a number of Amur tribes (Goldis, Nanai, and others), and finally the original inhabitants of the Far East, the Palaeo-Asiatics who live along the coast. The peoples belonging to this Palaeo or Old Asiatic group are known as Yukaghirs, Koriaks, Kamchadales, and Chukchees. The last-named have never really been subdued. Cape Chukotsk is even cited in the Tsarist Code as "not conquered." Even before the

Revolution the inhabitants, "not subjects in the full sense," had their own criminal law, and a degree of autonomy otherwise unknown in the Tsarist Empire, when, about the middle of the eighteenth century, the Russians, weary of costly wars of conquest, actually closed a prison that they had already established on the River Anadir.

Whereas the Chukchees as well as the Koriaks put up a stubborn resistance to the Tsarist Government, the other Palaeo-Asiatic tribes were pretty well exterminated systematically. And so, until the Bolshevik Revolution, the life of the Chukchees and other peoples took its course almost entirely apart from Russian history. In so far as they were untouched by Russian influence, their primitive culture, about which we have in many cases very inadequate knowledge, represents a primeval stage of human evolution. Most of what we do know to-day has reached us through the researches of the Leningrad Institute of the Peoples of the North. Whilst there is much that is interesting in detail in the position of women among them, yet the principal interest presented by the north and north-east of Asia and its peoples, hitherto without written language, is in the field of archæology and folk-lore.

The compressed attempt here made to survey the Soviet East does yet make one thing clear: that the Soviet East—a vast territory, embracing every kind of climate, from the sub-tropical to the arctic, and every variety of the animal and vegetable kingdom—is, in truth, a world in itself, and that its three divisions, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Northern Asia, contain a concrete recapitulation of the history of mankind. In the far north and in the north-east the primeval phase is still in part alive to this day; the ethnical and linguistic peculiarities of the Caucasus betray relics of a pre-historic era, else preserved only in mythical

tradition; and, finally, Central Asia presents itself as the battlefield of all races and civilizations that have ever exercised a determining influence upon the history of mankind.

It follows that the three parts of the Soviet East correspond to three human epochs, which cannot be measured in centuries, but rather in thousands of years. Thousands of years still survive in the Soviet East. Here, as in no other country on earth, space becomes time, and a journey from the northernmost to the southernmost point represents a journey through human history, beginning in the earliest primeval days, passing through the pre-historic to the historical epoch, and ending in the present, the world of to-day.

LINGERING ECHOES OF MATRIARCHY

TRACES OF THE AMAZONS AND FEMALE DEITIES IN THE CAUCASUS

I HAVE ALREADY INDICATED IN THE INTRODUCTION THAT Asia, the continent in which the earliest historical civilized states arose, appears to be the ground upon which matriarchy persisted longest and most vigorously, with the exception of districts in Africa and Australia with which we are certainly not here concerned. And so it is not surprising that even to-day we find there in some parts unmistakable traces of the matriarchal social order, otherwise a thing of the past. Not only in the legends, fairy-tales, and sagas, and in the whole mythology, which are still a living and fertile part of the mental activity of many of these peoples, but also in ancient customs, rites, and manners that are still maintained.

Nor is it any more surprising that many of the traditions connected with matriarchy are attached to stories referring to the Amazons. For since Bachofen's day we know how closely connected are gynocracy and the social order of the Amazons, though Bachofen is of opinion that the latter was a degenerate form of matriarchy, and at the same time a marked rise in human manners because, compared with hetaerism, it represented a more advanced stage of civilization, a higher development.

It is, therefore, of great importance to the questions we have to examine that classical antiquity sought the feminine kingdom of the Amazons principally in Hither Asia, but especially between the Caspian and the Black Sea. In the history of Alexander the Great we find it

stated that Pharasmanes, king of the Khos, came with a retinue of fifteen hundred horse to Zariaspa in Baktria, where Alexander was encamped with his army (329 to 328 B.C.), and offered him his services. This king ruled over the lower Oxus Valley, said that he was a neighbour of the Colchians and of the female nation of the Amazons, and declared his readiness to place auxiliaries at Alexander's disposal, if he would undertake a campaign against the Colchians and Amazons.

It is true that we can no longer check the various accounts of the matter, nor determine whether there really were Amazon nations, in which women ruled over women and only paired with men once a year, after a battle. But Chinese historians, too, tell of feminine kingdoms, one of which—agreeing in all its main features with what the authors of antiquity relate of the institutions of the Amazon state—is said to have survived till the eighth century A.D. Thus there is an account of a visit from a princess of one of these kingdoms, located likewise on the shores of the Caspian Sea by historians contemporary with the Tang dynasty. But since these stories are always located in the Caucasus, especially in the neighbourhood of the Caspian Sea, it is at least probable that in the days of the Greeks—and presumably later—matriarchal conditions were dominant there. And, if we add that similar accounts are found in Byzantium, and even persist into modern times, we cannot deny that all this evidence is of considerable, almost decisive, significance.

It is interesting that the Italian Pater *Lamberti*, who spent full eighteen years in Mingrelia (formerly Colchis, the modern province of Georgia) from 1635 to 1653 as a missionary, cites one of these reports; in his *Description of Colchis* which appeared in Naples in 1654 he writes:

Whilst I was still there, the Prince of Colchis received news that certain peoples had emigrated from their own countries in large numbers and had formed three armies. The largest of these armies, it was said, had attacked the Tsar of Moscow, whilst

another had betaken itself to the Caucasus in order to attack the Svanetians and Karachais. The armies had been repulsed with great losses from this district, and when the inhabitants stripped the dead, they found a number of women among them. In confirmation of the report the Dadian (the Prince of Mingrelia, of the family of Dadiani) received several pieces of armour worn by these women. Not only did they give the prince great satisfaction, but they stirred the desire in him to capture at least *one* such woman alive.

The weapons that were brought to the prince were remarkably beautiful, the work of female hands, forged with exquisite taste. The helmet was just like those worn by horsemen. The breast and back and arm pieces consisted of thin plates, put together like scale-armour which is easy to put on. But a little woollen coat hung from the cuirass to the knees, so bright red that it looked like porphyry. The shoes were marvellous in workmanship and appearance, and the uppers covered with little pieces of shining brass, no bigger than a pinhead. Yet on the inner side of these buttons there were small holes by means of which they were threaded on fine yet strong threads of goat's hair, beautifully and most skilfully plaited. The arrows, gilded from top to bottom, were very long, made of the best steel, but well polished, not pointed like ordinary arrows.

That is all that I saw and heard of these warrior women in that country; it was said that they were generally at war with the Tatars, known as Kalmucks. . . .

This report, not three hundred years old, sounds quite probable, and may be connected with two quite recent archæological discoveries in the Caucasus. In one case it is a woman's grave with a lance (not far from Tiflis), in the other another woman's grave (in North Ossetia) in which a woman's dress was found magnificently embroidered with precious stones together with a breast-plate of metal rings.

The myths and legends that have gathered in the course of centuries round the Georgian Queen *Tamara* are also very instructive in this connection. As with Princess Olga in Russia, Libussa among the Czechs, and Vanda in Poland, her name ushers in a brilliant

period of the political and cultural history of the country. But whereas the Slav queens, according to tradition, are presented as great and all-wise mothers, as lawgivers, judges, and peacemakers, Queen Tamara lives in the popular imagination in a double character; she, too, is something of "Our gracious Lady of Georgia," but also a definitely warlike, man-killing huntress and Amazon. She ruled two centuries later than the Slav queens, from 1185 to 1214, over a kingdom that stretched from the Caspian to the Black Sea, from the Northern Caucasus to Persian Azerbaijan, that is, over the territory that is designated as the native home of the Amazons. For Queen Tamara, whose beauty and wisdom and militant spirit is extolled in flaming words, rhymes, and proverbs on all Georgian daggers, winecups, and musical instruments, whose name still re-echoes in all the valleys and on all the peaks of Georgia, this woman is at once male and female, she is Semiramis, Ishtar, and Salome, the Morning Star, Saviour, Goddess, Demon, Vampire—in short, she is something to which the laws of reality do not apply.

Thus in a choral song dedicated to her we hear:

Tamara wears a warlike helmet on her head, and her ears are adorned with long pendants. Her eyes are sapphires, her teeth pearls, and her neck is of jasper. She wears a coat of mail and rides a steed of the colour of sand. But beneath her coat of mail she wears a satin robe.

And what we hear of the war that she wages against the sea, seems to sound from the far distance of ancient Greece:

Tamara chased the Turks and Saracens out of the land, defeated the famous Nur-Eddin, captured the Pontus and Paphlagonia, and founded the Empire of Trebizond. She repulsed the Sultan of Azerbaijan, pushed on into the Taurus, and occupied Khorasan. Only the Caspian still resisted her power.

"What can Tamara, what can the Queen of Kings, do against me?" said the sea. "Mighty is her power, but still mightier are my waves."

The Queen heard these words, and turned her head slowly to the rebel. She frowned darkly between her long brows. Straightway the warriors marched against the rebellious sea and the shores of the Caspian groaned aloud. Oil spread over the horrified waves and the flames rose to the heavens.

The Caspian Sea withied long on his fiery bed and begged the Queen for mercy. He promised her all his treasures and unconditional surrender. Then the Queen pardoned him . . .

It is noteworthy that in this saga, related by *N. Kazan-Kreta*, an altogether Amazonian subject is treated: the war against the sea. For the sea, in contrast with the female, maternal earth, represents the fructifying moisture, the male principle, and appears as such in various Greek myths, for instance, in that of Bellephoron.

Queen Tamara is sung not only as tamer of the sea, but also as a huntress. For it is said that she was passionately fond of the chase, and that "all stags in the wide forest offered themselves to her arrows."

The princes, *beys*, and *pashas* had no mercy on their horses, if only they could catch a glimpse of Tamara. But the Queen did not give a thought to them, and did not deign to cast so much as a glance at them, for her favourite falcon had flown away beyond the Kura and perched on a steep mountain side, and would not return.

But neither would the man-hating Tamara cast a glance at her contemporary, the great poet *Shota Rustavelli*, the Georgian Homer—so the legend tells—who was mad with love of his Queen and probably composed his great and famous epic poem in her honour, *The Man in the Panther's Skin*, still the sacred Scripture of the Georgians.

For the rest, the legend attributes further Amazonian traits to Tamara. Lermontov's famous *Ballad of Tamara* is based upon one of these sagas of her cruelty to her lovers:

THE BALLAD OF TAMARA

O'er Darial's misty chasm
Where Terek's waves tumble and roar,
An ancient fortress rises
From the grim and rocky shore.

In the tower, to the wind's wild howling,
Was seated Tamara, the Queen;
Without, an angel of beauty;
The blackest of devils within.

O'er the waves, full of passion and longing,
Rang out the voice of the Queen.
The wayfarer halted and hearkened,
And obeyed the summons unseen.

Warrior, and merchant, and herdsman
She ensnared with her magical power;
In silence a sullen eunuch
Flung open the door of the tower.

On the softest of couches reclining,
With pearls at her throat and breast,
In the grip of lust and longing,
Tamara awaited the guest.

But when from the slopes of the mountain
The sun tore the veil of night,
Once more reigned quiet and darkness
In Tamara's tower on the height.

Only the Terek's wild swelling
Broke the silence with its roar;
Billow on billow crowding,
Wave pressing on wave to the shore.

They bore, with a hollow murmur,
A fair youth's corpse on high;
And down from the tower a woman
Cried, Good-bye! and again Good-bye!

But beside this image of the aggressive Amazon,
another, though somewhat fainter picture of the immortal
Tamara comes down to us from the peaks of the Caucasus.

In the wonderland of Svanetia, the highest inhabited region in the world, whose divine origin is regarded as beyond question by the Svanetians, and where, on the rocky slopes, over 10,000 feet high, inaccessible, and covered with almost eternal snow, a fragment of unadulterated Middle Ages still lives, there stands the ancient church Lamaria (St. Mary) on a hill near the village of Ushgum, on the banks of the Ingur River. Below this church, so the villagers assert, Queen Tamara lies buried, and the Svanetians—who are said to have been converted to Christianity by her—believe that, except for the Mother of God, she was the most glorious woman who ever lived.

In general Tamara is honoured in a peculiar manner in Svanetia, which is still semi-heathen: all the virtues, Christian, heathen, and political, are attributed to her, and she is said to have been so beautiful that all princes were at her feet. There is not a church in this mountain country that is not traced back to her. Indeed her fame as a bulwark is so great throughout Georgia that not only are all fortresses, castles, churches, ruins, and aqueducts attributed to her, but even beyond the Caucasus Mountains there is hardly a beacon or other tower that is not closely associated with her name. We should hardly be surprised if the newly constructed railways were attributed to her!

It is difficult to discover now where Queen Tamara is actually buried. But the epitaph which some poet or popular legend has composed for her is as follows:

“I was once Queen Tamara. Lands and seas were filled with my fame. I had fish transferred from the Black Sea to the Caspian. My steeds penetrated to Isfahan. I buried my sword in the *maidan* at Stambul. And when I had accomplished all this, I took nine yards of linen with me to the other world.”

Tamara: she is the central figure, nearest alike to the Georgian's senses and their hearts, almost heathen in fact, although she was not only an Amazon, but also a saint, and lived in the twelfth century. Is it not

altogether significant that the ideal figure of the most famous of Caucasian lands, the only one that can look back upon three thousand years of history and civilization, and constantly haunted the imagination of the Greeks in antiquity as "divine Colchis," should be embodied in a woman and not a man? Georgia knows nothing of a male parallel to Tamara. And so it cannot be chance that the second, wholly Christian, ideal figure of the Georgians, a thousand years earlier, is also embodied in a woman, St. Nino, the patron saint and "Enlightener of Georgia." Her field of activity was Mtskheta, the city of kings and patriarchs, splendid in her day, and she sought to make converts to Christianity in public disputations with those of other faiths, and in Georgian literature she is represented as an Amazon of the Church, a kind of counterpart to Queen Tamara.

"Love of thee rends me like the sword of Tamburlaine, thou art the vineyard of Kakhetia, art gold and honey blended," sings *Leonidze* of her. And another Georgian poet, *Grigol Robakidze*, addresses her thus in a hymn dedicated to her:

Thy virginity
Is a cooling fountain,
And thy gentleness
Like the tender clover . . .
Thy beauty inflamed us men of Mtskheta;
How marvellous art thou, virgin and woman.
The vine alone thou loved'st silently,
And him gavest thou sorrowfully as a sacrifice.
And when thou heardest the low call from above
Didst thou cut a cross of vine boughs
And boundest the wound with thy hair. . . .

If we sum up the reports that occur again and again in ancient and modern times of feminine empires in the Caucasus, and try to draw conclusions from the leading position of women in Georgian history, we are driven to reflection merely by the accumulation of assertions and themes, without attempting to answer

the question whether there really were Amazon tribes. It is interesting, moreover, that in the manifold tangle of legend in the Caucasus the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy is treated in various forms, and that in a manner which clearly echoes many of the well-known myths of classical antiquity. It almost seems as if the legends sought to give concrete expression to the fact that the domination of man is not decreed by nature, but has evolved from the earlier matriarchal state. The most widely diffused is the following Cherkess saga:

When our forefathers still lived on the shores of the Black Sea, they often waged war on the Emmeches. These were women inhabiting the Cherkess and Svanetian mountain districts. They admitted no men, but, warlike in spirit, took any woman into their company who wanted to share in their expeditions and receive admittance to their heroic guild. At last, after prolonged wars with varying fortunes, the two armies faced one another once more in order to fight a decisive battle, when, suddenly and quite unexpectedly, the leader of the Emmeches, who was famed as a great prophetess, demanded a secret conference with Thulme, the leader of the Cherkesses, who also possessed the spirit of prophecy.

Straightway a tent was put up between the two armies, whither the prophet and prophetess betook themselves. After several hours the leader of the Emmeches emerged at last and declared to her female army that she had been convinced by the stronger prophetic reasonings of Thulme and had yielded to them, together with her own, and had therefore chosen the prophet for her husband on condition that all hostilities should cease and both armies follow the example of their leaders. And so it was. The women straightway ceased to wage war and retained the Cherkesses as their husbands, and the latter dispersed cheerfully to their homes with their wives.

The extraordinary, almost unearthly veneration in which the two principle women in the Caucasus are held—Tamara and St. Nino—almost suggest that what we have here is some kind of deification, over and above the myth. We have only to remember what a lofty position the ethnological scholarship of to-day concedes

to the idea of the goddess, the Mother-Goddess, alike in the ancient Oriental civilizations—the Babylonian, Egyptian, and that of Asia Minor—and thence likewise in the Graeco-Roman and Norse. “The first product of mythological thought, the first god that man created in his own image, was a goddess,” says *Ida Lublinsky* in her illuminating monograph *Vom Mutterrecht zum Vaterrecht* (From Matriarchy to Patriarchy). And we find in Bachofen the theory, now generally accepted, that the privileged position of women in matriarchal society, in addition to their great economic importance, especially in agriculture, which was their own invention, was due in no small degree to the pre-eminent part they played in the religious cults of that society. “Wherever we come across gynocracy, it is united with the mystery of the religion of the underworld,” says Bachofen, and he proceeds: “This conclusion is the more certain because we cannot fail to realize that of these two expressions of gynocracy, the civil and the religious, the latter only serves as a basis for the former. The religious ideas come first, the civic forms are their consequence and expression.”

It is significant that the supreme deity of the North Caucasian Chechens and Ingushes, as well as of the South Caucasian Abkhazians—who lived until recently under conditions similar to those of their neighbours in Old Georgia—was female. Not long ago a Mother Goddess of the Chechens and Ingushes was discovered there, corresponding wholly to the Syrian goddess described by Lucian. And among the Ossetes, also in the Northern Caucasus, Mary the Madonna has taken the place of the ancient Mother Goddess, whilst the Abkhazians regarded both the Sun and the Earth as powerful goddesses. And so the worship of Mother Earth was left entirely to the women among the Abkhazians. The Abkhazian women prayed to her on particular days and offered her propitiatory sacrifices, the preparation of which was also the duty of the women.

But the most convincing proof of the matriarchal

fact of the primacy of women in the religious cult is that not long ago the Abkhazians still observed a number of rites—associated with the worship of water and earth—in which only “pure” women might take part: not virgins, but women who were already beyond passion. The Greeks and Romans, too, had various festivals in honour of the deities of the underworld—presumably originating in pre-Hellenic and pre-Roman times—and to these, likewise, only women were admitted, no men. Strangely enough, the spring festival of *Kargatui*, a bird festival, is still celebrated by the Bashkir women on the wide Ural steppes in the absence of the men, whilst there is another similar religious ceremony on the mountain peaks of Svanetia, likewise performed by the women alone. It is a fantastic, magical country, where to this very day sacred mystical dances with music and choral accompaniment are still performed every year in honour of the seductively lovely goddess of the chase, Dali, the Diana of the Svanetians.

Grigol Robakidze’s description of one of these sacred ceremonies of the Svanetian women, in his novel, *The Call of the Goddess*, seems like the living breath of a long past epoch, of a yet vital myth:

On the next day—it was the first week after Easter, known as the New Week—the women of Ushgul repaired to the hall of prayer that was known to them alone.

Late in the afternoon they reached a solitary hill . . . and stopped beneath a beech tree split by lightning, in whose shade it was calm and bright. None dared to speak a word. They lighted a fire in front of the rotten hollow stem of the tree, and took carefully out of a bag a large piece of dough in which the grace of Earth was kneaded, and then a little cheese, and began to bake the sacrificial bread in the deepest silence.

They made six loaves, three big and three small. . . . The three first they offered to the Mother of God whilst they danced—but without enthusiasm. Then three of them turned to the Great Mother, who is far older than St. Mary. They took the three remaining loaves, some wax candles, and a big, glowing coal.

Speechless and with heavy tread they approached the secret place. The ruins, clearly the remains of an old heathen hall of prayer, stood lifeless and deserted. The crumbling stones were covered with moss and mould, and flecked with patches of brown and yellow. On one of the stones a vine was carved, on another grapes and leaves. Some bore strange inscriptions, worn by the weather at places, and all breathed a spirit of ancient prayer, alien and yet warm.

The women paused and listened in the ghostly silence which lay like a stone itself among the stones, and they prepared themselves inwardly. Then they looked for the sacrificial trough, which was covered with slates. They placed the coal in the slight hollow and flung the candles upon it. One of the women blew upon the slumbering glow of the coal with controlled eagerness.

Wholly absorbed, breathing deeply, the three women waited to see whether the candles would catch light; then their prayers had been heard by the goddess. Three candles trembled together, and there was silence in the heart of the Great Mother, which the women's hearts sensed most clearly. . . . The shining courage of the three praying women penetrated the Earth, the Great Mother. . . . They fell on their knees and prayed to the Great Mother, with the loaves in their upraised hands. Their words were stifled and broken. All you could hear was: "Oh, Mother, give us strength and courage, the courage of men! Grant it, oh grant it!"

The prayer was at an end. . . . The offering was made. Three times they kneeled again, and then returned without haste. And now three hearts burned chaste and bright, like the pale lilac stock flowering beside them. The women who had remained behind awaited them in silence, with downcast eyes. When they became aware of the soft approaching tread of those who had offered sacrifice, they leapt up and shouted with wide open eyes: "Salvation! Salvation through prayer to Earth!"

"Salvation to you, too!" replied the returning women in deep tones.

They all seated themselves and tasted the loaves. Meanwhile one of them brought a sage blossom. A strange thrill went through the women's bodies. It was sweet and overwhelming. It was a foretaste of fruitfulness.

Slowly they rose and prayed and kissed one another. Then they ran softly and lightly back to the mountain. . . .

PRIESTESSES AND AMAZON WARS AMONG THE
POLAR PEOPLES

Clear traces of matriarchal primacy in religious life in the Soviet East are not confined to the Bashkir steppes and the Caucasus Mountains; they extend much further, to the very north of Asia.

Among most of the hunting, fishing, and nomad peoples there who breed reindeer, adherents of Shamanism, we find that in the performance of religious ceremonies the women enjoy almost equal rights with men. There, too, there are sacred rites that only women can perform, for instance the renewed ploughing in drought, or when pestilence rages (here, indeed, the presence of men is actually regarded as disastrous); and the women take part in sacrifices and dances accompanying the religious exercises.

Among the Yakuts the female *shamans*, or priests, are regarded as the more powerful, their influence over the spirits is supposed to be far greater than that of the men. Among the early Kamchadales of Kamchatka none but women performed the duties of *shaman*. And with the Chukchees, the inhabitants of the extreme north-east of Asia, women are considered to be marked out by nature as *shamans*.

Yet it is not only in respect of religion and ritual that various of these northern and north-eastern Asiatic tribes are still comparatively matriarchal in their outlook, but in other aspects of their lives. For instance, the Yakuts have no special word for "father," whose identity cannot always be determined, and what we call the "family" is known there as "mother-lineage." A favourite theme of Yakut folklore is, therefore, in addition to the youth's search for a wife, the search of the young hero for his father.

The Evenks (Tunguses), likewise in Siberia, have retained even more matriarchal relics than the Yakuts. Even ancestor worship appears among them as a symbolic veneration of the women who once led the tribe.

There, too, kinship is reckoned only through the mother, and the relation between an uncle and his sister's children is so close that it is he who receives the *kalym*, the bride-price. With the Chukchees—according to the expert, Professor *Bogoras*, of Leningrad, who lived among them for many years—there is the typical case of the girl who, as the owner of a herd of reindeer, takes a husband who is not accorded equal rights for several years. In general, the women enjoy a good deal of freedom among the tribes of Northern Asia; they often have the chief say in the house, especially mothers who, when the inheritance is divided, receive everything that they have ever captured in the chase, in which they take part, or acquired in any other way.

Matriarchal institutions also subsist among the original inhabitants, who are now dying out, the Ainu. In an early account we read of the Kamchadales, now almost entirely Russianized, that the men not only perform any kind of work that the women command, but even cook. The women, therefore, who also practise all handicrafts, are the sole owners of property and their husbands are altogether dependent upon them. Is it strange that we are subsequently told that these women, doubtless because of their dominant position, are prettier and cleverer than the men, and keep their youth longer?

Bogoras describes the Chukchee women, moreover, as very independent and spirited, pugnacious, nay, boisterous, as genuine Amazons. They often ride much better than the men, attend festivals as they please, and if it should happen that their husbands beat them, they reciprocate the beating with the greater vigour. (The man is then as regarded as "thrashed by a woman.") At the time when the Tsarist Government occupied this district, which was never really conquered by the Russians, and when many freedom-loving Chukchee did not want to survive the occupation, a number of women took their own lives. As everywhere in the Soviet East, we find references to heroines in the folk poetry of the Chukchees.

By no means uncommon among the Chuckchees are echoes of the Brunhilde theme, the bride who resists the bridegroom proudly and stoutly, and must be conquered by his strength and courage. Bogoras gives the following variant of the theme:

A girl lives in a tent with her ancient parents, and refuses all her wooers by challenging them to a race, winning it, and then invariably dismissing them. One day a youth appears in her tent who plants his lance in the earth before the opening. The girl is not at home just then. "What have you come for?" asks her father. "I want to marry, and you have a daughter who is proud and a very fast runner. She challenges all her wooers to a race." The old man looks into the youth's face and says: "Is it really possible that she will win against you, too?" "I don't know—perhaps . . ." is his answer. The girl soon returns from the herd. "Oh, oh, whose spear is that planted before our entrance." Her mother says: "Don't speak so loud. "No, no; may he win the race against me!" and therewith she enters the tent. Her long, heavy plaits fall to her ankles and almost touch the earth. She changes her dress immediately, putting on trousers and a jacket.

They quit the tent and both start directly. The girl is a little ahead of her rival and is already up the last hill on the way to the goal. She is actually on the way back, and is still ahead. Leaving the hill behind her again she says provocatively: "Couldn't you overtake me here at least?" "No, I am too tired." But his toes are already on a level with the maiden's heels, at the next hill he comes abreast of her, and now he flies faster than an arrow from the bow. The long red tassel at his back hangs like a reed in the air, and the girl's two plaits are like two arrows. As he looks at her over his shoulder, he runs faster still. His heart is light, and when he looks round once more, his rival is far behind. Then he grasps the end of his running staff, raises it like the horn of a wild reindeer, and rends the air. The girl bites her lips and sees that she can no longer overtake him.

When she returned home, the girl laid aside her racing garment, unlatched the youth's shoes, and helped him to undress. Then she cut the long red tassel from the man's fur shirt, sewed it on to her own everyday dress, and turned to her father: "I shall

not look to the herd again to-night." She prepared supper, made a good bed of soft skins, and approached the youth. "Lie down." When she had covered him with a rug and put out the light, she lay down herself beside him. . . .

It strikes us as altogether Amazonian that there are regular wrestling matches between the youths and maidens among the Chukchees. With the few surviving Yukaghirs, also belonging to the Palaeo-Asiatic group and possessing hitherto only a picture alphabet, the same thing recurs in the form of verbal battles on the theme of love, cut in bark in a very original manner. Among the Koriaks, northern neighbours of the Chukchees, this duel of the sexes finds more symbolic expression: in the night in which the husband brings his bride home she is so firmly bound round by her garments that it is several nights before he can possess her. No wonder that his neighbours make great mock of him about it; indeed, it is significant that among all these peoples the men are often mocked by their wives.

MATRIARCHAL FEATURES THROUGHOUT THE SOVIET EAST

It is not only among the Polar tribes, the most primitive peoples in the Soviet East, that we come upon customs everywhere which may easily be interpreted as relics of a matriarchal phase. The same applies to many other parts of Asia.

It is true that, for example, modern "Amazonian battles" between the sexes are hardly anywhere to be found in the Caucasus, although it may be regarded as the land of female warriors and heroines *par excellence*. The participation of women is clearly shown in countless traditions, histories, and tales in which the various peoples of the Caucasus—inhabitants of Daghestan, Cherkesses, Svanetians, Kurds, and others—glorify their historic wars right down to the Tsarist conquest.

We must interpret it as a symptom of matriarchy that among the Khevsurs a fight between men must cease the moment a woman steps between them and pulls down her head covering, or *mandili*. Among the Cherkesses, too, no act of physical violence is allowed in the presence of a woman; if she flings herself with loosened hair between the combatants, the fight is held to be finished. (We have parallels in antiquity in stories of women intervening in warlike conflicts, such as the Sabine women or the women of Elis.) Again, if an outsider wants to escape pursuit among the Cherkesses, and seeks a refuge, he can be admitted to a Cherkess clan through adoption in an *aul*, or Caucasian village. To this end his future adopted father must fetch him and must bare the breast of his wife in the presence of all the assembled people; and in the moment when the adopted son touches the woman's nipple three times with his lips, he counts as a member of the new clan. (We still find the same custom among the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, in Central Asia.) This custom seems to have become so firmly rooted that in course of time it proved the most effectual means of escaping from a blood feud; for it sufficed to touch a woman's breast with the lips, in order to be secure from her husband's vengeance. Among the Ossetes a yet greater significance was attributed to the action: from the moment when a murderer had touched the naked breast of his victim's mother with his lips, he took the place of her son, and there was an end of the enmity between the families.

And so women appear in the Caucasus to this day as a refuge, a sanctuary for fugitives, as the place of safety which, among other peoples, is sought in the sanctuary of the deity. And when we realize how deeply rooted the custom of blood-vengeance is in the Caucasus in general, to what a degree this "supreme law of the mountains" constitutes the very substance, the true legal basis of life as a whole, we see with what overpowering force the matriarchal factor still influences

men's actions, when it actually proves stronger than the supreme law of vendetta.

There are a number of other traces of matriarchal custom in the Caucasian mountains, and scattered elsewhere throughout the Soviet East, that are well worth notice; taken as a whole they complete the picture of a probable domination of women in the civilization under consideration.

According to *Dubrovín*, for instance, it often occurs among the Caucasian mountaineers that children are called after the mother, not the father. The Georgians use the word *mama* for father; and in current phrases like "husband and wife," "father and mother," "son and daughter," "brother and sister," the woman always comes first, unlike the order in the Indo-Germanic languages. The chivalry shown by men towards women there still reminds us of mediæval knightly love, as pictured by Rustavelli in his glorious epic poem. It is significant that in Queen Tamara's country women occupy in every way a position of equality, independence, and sometimes privilege, and in some circles it may still be observed that on railway journeys, for instance, the men occupy the carriages with hard seats, the women those with soft seats. Further, the Georgian proverb: "Dogs don't bark at a woman," is worth mentioning.

We know the part played by the mother's brother in matriarchal society in contrast to the father, who is difficult to discover. That knowledge throws light on the significance of the following facts. Among the Udins, descendants of the ancient Caucasian Albanians, of whom there are now only two colonies in Azerbaijan, the bridegroom's parents discuss matters in the first instance with the brother of the bride's mother, once she is chosen, and they charge him with the conduct of further negotiations. In return, he has a right to an "uncle's share," and it is he who receives the first presents and conducts the actual marriage. The bride's brother plays a similar important part, handing over his sister, ceremoniously mounted on horseback, to the

bridegroom. It seems, moreover, that the Mountain Jews of the Caucasus (Daghestan) have taken over this latter custom from their neighbours. And it sounded strangely self-conflicting when one of these Jewish Caucasians, now a high Soviet official in Makhach Kala, tried to describe to me in the presence of his sister, who still looked beautiful and girlish, how twenty-five years earlier he, as a young fellow, had led her ceremoniously to her husband's house, she being enthroned on a horse behind thick veils.

Amongst the Avars, the most numerous of the so-called tribes of Daghestan, the girls choose their husbands themselves. Amongst the Kurds, some of whom live in Azerbaijan and are among the oldest descendants of the great fallen empires of Asia Minor, the women are free and independent, in contrast to their oppressed sisters among the surrounding Turks. It is they who give a name to a newborn son and, if they are particularly beautiful and clever, they give him their own name as well. According to ancient accounts, the Kurdish women exercised great power at one time.

There is a festival that still reminds us of that fact, a festival about which Professor *Alekperov* in Baku told me recently, and which presents certain markedly matriarchal features. Every spring the women of the village choose the most energetic and capable of their numbers to be "Shah," and for a single day she is given power over the whole place. Through the officials who are elected together with her, she can summon any man who is accused by his wife to appear before her, can punish him and even have him flogged. During the whole game, which is accompanied by dance and song, the woman Shah sits silent and issues her commands through her subordinates. The festival finishes towards midnight with a procession of women to the nearest river, led by the woman Shah.

It appears from a number of stories in which the people of Daghestan, who are Sunnites, glorify their

wars against the unbelieving Shiites in the fourteenth century, that women played a part in them. The pride of every inhabitant of Daghestan is the famous story of the village of Andalal which, with its few thousand inhabitants, resisted the whole army of the Persian Emperor, when the women, seeing that the men were weary of battle, put the enemy to flight and finally defeated him. So, too, the women played a great part in the "holy war" under Shamil, the hero of Daghestan's freedom, in the last century (1798-1871). The Svane-tian women likewise fought shoulder to shoulder with their menfolk.

The women are still the rulers among the Jassians, a small tribe living in settlements in hidden gorges near Sakatal in Daghestan; they practise agriculture and fishing. They are, moreover, very competent in the use of arms, but that is not peculiar to Jassian women; it is by no means infrequent elsewhere in the Caucasus. But it is noteworthy that among the Jassians, whose name means "nation of girls," the maintenance of the family is regarded as the woman's duty. The attempt has even been made to deduce a still existing matriarchy from this fact. But the explanation is rather that the men are mostly obliged to seek work outside their own district, on account of the poverty of the soil, so that they leave their wives alone at home, who, therefore, become more independent. As with the majority of the Caucasian mountaineer women, one meets with women of great strength and beauty among the Jassians, with fine and proud, almost masculine, bearing, and they are greatly respected in the neighbouring markets for their honesty and intelligence.

We frequently find, however, still living traces of a former matriarchal state not only among the Caucasian tribes, some Christian, some Moslem, but also among the peoples of Soviet Asia who are much more deeply involved in the influence of Islam. Must we not regard it as a lingering echo of an Amazon order of society that

the still partially nomad Turkmans have a wedding ceremony in which the bride, wrapped from head to foot in a long veil or cloth, must race her future husband on horseback, and that it is no uncommon circumstance for the swathed Amazon to reach the goal sooner than the practised, unimpeded youth? In this race the young bride often carries a slaughtered lamb or a goat on her lap. She is pursued by her bridegroom and the other young men, and must try, by swerving skilfully in full gallop, to prevent any of them from approaching her and snatching the goat or lamb. According to Vambéry this game is customary among all the nomads of Central Asia.

Among the Mountain Tajiks of the Pamir the women move about freely, and not only do the men discuss all questions with them, but their voice has weight within the social unit to which they belong. An "elder" woman counts for as much as an "elder" man. Whereas property is in common among the men, the women own private property (cattle, etc.), and the men are not admitted at all to the larder. It is an ancient characteristic of matriarchy that this is the exclusive domain of the woman.

Even before the coming of the present order, there were some women among the Turkmans who attained a fairly high social standing, thanks to their good brains or to some other innate quality. To this very day we hear particularly of the famous woman Khan *Gul Jamal*, who played a great part in the struggle against the Russians in the oasis of Merv.

The history of the Uzbek women, who were, perhaps, more shut off from the outer world than any other women in the Moslem East, likewise tells us of a few famous women, even in recent years; in spite of the fetters of tradition, they succeeded in attaining a fairly high position, socially and intellectually, and enjoyed great popularity with the people. First among these is *Khal Bibi* in the vilayet of Namanghan, who died at the second half of the last century. She was Government Chief of the *Mihrebs*, that is to say, she controlled the

distribution of water. And since the economic weal and woe of the district, with all its towns and *kishlaks* (villages) depended in those days solely upon the energy, foresight, and activity of the *Mıhrab*, we may realize what a high position this woman had won. Previously her husband had occupied the post, and his wife took an active part in his affairs. When he died the brave woman, then forty years of age, put aside her veil, adopted men's clothes, and forced her fellow-countrymen to recognize her as *Mıhrab-Bashi*, which office she continued to fill till her death.

Among the Kirghiz it also occurs that the bridal pair fight before the wedding; in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they had a heroine called *Jangul Mursa* who was famed far and wide as a brilliant horsewoman and archer, and possessed all the manly virtues. There are a number of sagas and legends telling of her bravery, and so great was her renown that she was regarded as the chief of her clan. Here is one of the episodes that is especially popular among the Kirghiz: the hero Tilku, no less renowned, had wooed her eagerly, and, although she liked him, her pride would not permit her to condescend to him. But one night she stole to his camp whilst he sat with his followers round the camp fire, and, speaking of her just at that moment in his character of injured lover, let fall some uncomplimentary remark about her. In spite of her love of the hero she shot him resolutely with a deadly arrow, and immediately dealt out the same fate to his companions.

But the heroic *Jangul Mursa* is by no means unique among the modern Kirghiz. Barely thirty years ago there lived a woman in the Alai Valley, that is to say between the spurs of the Tien Shan (the Heavenly Mountains) and the Pamir Plateau, between the former Khanate of Khoqand and Chinese Kashgar, who likewise won the admiration of the people far and wide; she was the so-called *Tsarina of Alai*, and her real name was *Kurban Jan*. She came of simple people, was born

in 1811, and married at eighteen to a Kirghiz Kazakh to whom she had been promised as a child. But as Kurban Jan never saw her husband till the wedding day, and was not at all satisfied with her parents' choice, she demanded an immediate divorce. A chief of the Kara Kirghiz whom the Emir of Khoqand had made ruler of Alai, took a liking for the vigorous, clever Kurban Jan and helped her to obtain the divorce she desired; he afterwards married her himself. The couple lived together for twenty-nine years. But when the woman became a widow at the age of fifty, the Emir appointed her to be her husband's successor, quite contrary to the usual Mohammedan custom, and only on account of the great honour in which she was held among her people. He sent her the customary documents and gifts of honour.

The Kara Kirghiz and all their neighbours venerated this unusual woman and were glad to repair to her *yurta* or tent when they had disputes to settle. And in the negotiations between the revolting Kirghiz and the Russians sent to subdue them, Kurban Jan played an important part, as a person of outstanding sagacity and diplomatic talent. She it was who convinced her people of the hopelessness of further resistance.

When in 1907, she died at the age of ninety-six, still the legendary Tsarina of Alai—eye-witnesses declare that in spite of her age she still retained much of her feminine charm—she left one hundred and eighty-three descendants, including fifty-seven great-grandchildren and six great-great-grandchildren. To the very last she was always seen on horseback, riding about the slopes of the Alai Mountains. She was a true nomad and avoided life in cities, always living in a felt *yurta* and knowing but one care: the welfare of her fellow-tribesmen.

She was buried with great honours in the principal cemetery of the city of Osh. Her grandchildren and relatives followed the hearse in two compact files, all

on horseback, and wailing : "Thou wert our mirror!" Even the Russian Government was represented at the funeral. And, as in her lifetime, numbers of Kirghiz, men and women, make pilgrimage to the tall *masar*, the honoured tombstone of their princess, and recount all their wishes, their joys and sorrows, to the departed. Does not this give us a picture of a really "Great Mother"?

Let me conclude this brief survey of the lingering echoes of matriarchy, some still vital, with an account of the *Kargatui* that I have already mentioned, the festival of the Bashkir women. As stated, what we have here is a spring festival in which *only women* may take part, a festival, moreover, that reminds us a little of the Roman Saturnalia. Just as the Roman slaves were freed on this one festive day, so on the day of the *Kargatui* the women of the Ural steppes, oppressed by the yoke of Islam, might feel free and mistress of themselves. We have a magnificent poetical description of the festival from the pen of *A. Nukhrat*, a woman now living in Moscow and devoting herself to literary and social activities, a Chuvash by birth who grew up in a neighbouring Bashkir village, often took part in these festivals, and is in close touch with this most recent phase of woman's past. I will give a quotation from her description:

. . . A clear bright spring day rose over the steppes. The steppes stretched for miles, open and dark green, sportively girdled with green too, and decked with tiny lakes, like plates.

They seemed to be separated from the neighbouring valley only by barely discernible eyelets—the violet lines of the mountains. But even seen at close quarters, these mountains are no giants; they are the very youngest of the sons and grandsons of the Urals, and have slipped away in wilful truancy to the steppes and, overpowered by their wives and beauty, have remained there, held by an eternal spell.

The steppes have nothing to do with human habitation. They are all aloof in their beauty. And so are men and women aloof,

with their smoke and their soot and their garbage—and with the clear, sweet voices that rise to heaven from the minaret at this very morning hour. The steppes look down indifferently at human life and doings. . . . And they receive the long train of waggons indifferently that are being driven from the surrounding human settlements at this early hour, on this loveliest of spring days.

All these waggons glitter in the blinding rays of the sun with all the colours of the rainbow. And see who sit in them in merry, noisy crowds or walk round about them: the women.

The steppes are lovely in springtime. From all directions Bashkir women flock to the shores of the lake in the very middle of the valley, and there they pitch their gay camp. Not a single man is to be seen in the crowd, with its bright and festive dresses and its clear, ringing laughter. It is an exclusively feminine camp, and only women celebrate the festival of spring, the single day in which the women feel that they have command of the situation, give orders to the men, however timidly, and rest a little from their endless toil. . . .

And now follows an account of the immediate preparations for the festival, conducted by experienced, older women, who have already taken part in dozens of such festivals. And then, the authoress proceeds, wild skirt-dances are danced in the gaily embroidered national costumes with their silver ornamentation, gay songs are sung, and time is beaten with thimbles on the bottom of several buckets.

Nor is the feast forgotten; they chat and drink tea from the *samovar*. And then at last an old woman is seized by her memories of the festivals of *Kargatui* as they were celebrated on the steppes in the olden days:

"Can this really be called a festival at all?" is the cry that issues from her thin, pale lips. "Were the festivals of former days like this? Ah, no! the good old days are past and gone."

"*Kargatui* is a primeval festival, celebrated from time immemorial. Once upon a time, when the Bashkirs were sole lords of these endless steppes, when they possessed well-nourished herds of sheep and mares, when, among ten Bashkir *jigites* or horsemen, one was always a famous hero, in those days *Kargatui*

was not devoted solely to dancing, song, and the pleasures of the table. No doubt they thought of the needs of the body, although in those days the Bashkir people—praise be to Allah!—did not know the use of bread, so plentiful was meat. In those days it was the custom to slaughter young maics for *Kargatui*, and dozens of sheep, to eat one's fill, and scatter what was left over the fields for the birds and beasts: hence the name *Kargatui*, which means the festival of birds.

"The feast did not come till evening. But from early morning till evening heroines measured their strength against one another. Fights, races on foot and on swift steppe horses, archery, each followed in turn.

"In those days it was not only men who came forth as heroes on our steppes. There were Bashkir women then who gave birth to heroines and nourished them with their milk. Truly, the women of those times were not accustomed to hide in their *yurtas*. Nor did they cover themselves with the veil, but boasted of their strength and bravery. They did not shrink from accompanying their husbands to the wars, and they themselves set forth for pillage and assault. Their bows aimed truly straight to the heart of the enemy. We were told, too, that these heroines chose their own husbands, challenging the best and strongest horsemen to single combat. And they would marry only the hero who gained the victory over them three times running . . .

"Ah, yes; our race is scattered and enfeebled now. Our male heroes have died out. And our women? They are hardly fitted to bear children, let alone waging war. In earlier days children were born in the open, face to face with mighty Allah; and immediately afterwards the mother would mount her horse and ride for miles. But now, wise women assist her at the birth, or, what is worse, doctors. These wretched women know no shame before men. . . . In earlier days every Bashkir woman gave birth to ten or twelve sons. But now she bears no more than two or three, and grows old early, bent and withered like mat-grass in autumn. . . ."

Such is the spring festival of the Bashkir women, dating back to the most ancient tradition. Does not the old woman's account of the former conditions among native women sound like a collection of matriarchal themes and reminiscences?

PATRIARCHY

IF YOU TRAVEL IN CENTRAL ASIA, YOU MAY STILL SOMETIMES see the following scene in Uzbekistan, in the narrow, winding alleys of the towns between high, dull walls that look like fortifications, and behind which the actual dwellings of the Mohammedan inhabitants are hidden: an Uzbek, dressed in his bright-coloured long mantle, or *khalat*, unfastened and thrown open and glittering gaily in the sunshine, rides on a wretched little mule or *ishak* that is almost crushed beneath its load. On the back of his head is his glistening *tyuberyeika*, a little cap embroidered with silver or coloured thread, and in his hand he holds a slim staff with a sharp point, with which he drives his animal.

Some ten paces behind this man walks a human figure, funereally wrapped round from head to foot, whose age and sex cannot be determined. The face is covered with a thick, black net of horsehair; the body with a shapeless garment, thrown over the head and falling to the ground, and only the feet are visible. On the head, in rhythm with the steps, a bundle sways gently, and beneath the sombre coverings, which cover even the hands, a second stirs in the arms: a living bundle.

What is the meaning of this group, with its strange contrast? Not so easy to guess: a married couple going on a visit. The husband rides on the donkey, but the wife walks at a respectful distance behind him. On her head she carries the flat loaves intended as a present, and in her arms—her baby.

Again, another scene: It is in an Islamic mountain village on a cold winter morning. A Caucasian

mountaineer rides on a good horse, wearing the typical sheepskin cap that he never lays aside even in the hottest summer weather, the broad, classic felt collar or *burka* tossed boldly over his shoulders, the inevitable dagger and the cartridge-pouch displayed. His partner follows him, dressed only in a thin garment and a similar shawl, covering no more than her head, mouth, and shoulders; she is shivering with cold, almost frozen.

For until recently there was a very significant custom among the Caucasian mountaineers which forbade women to wear cloaks. But the haughty mountaineer held it to be beneath his dignity as a man to take his wife with him on horseback so as to save her from cold.

Both these scenes are symbolical. Symbolical of the relation between the sexes that was customary almost everywhere in the Islamic East until quite recently. If, therefore, we consider the position of women in the former Russian East, which is overwhelmingly Islamic, the first question that arises is that of the influence exercised by Islam on the position of women.

ISLAM AND WOMAN

It is a much disputed problem. The subjection and enslavement of women in the whole Mohammedan East is represented, now as due to the deadly influence of Islam, now as the product of a course of development that conflicts with the doctrine of Mohammed and its spirit. Opinions for and against are frequently irreconcilable.

One thing is at any rate true: the total deprivation of women of their human rights is alien to the letter of the *Koran*, and therefore to the original teaching of the Prophet. Thus the section of the *Koran* that is entirely devoted to the question of woman begins with the exhortation: "Oh, children of men, fear God who created you (men and women) from one and the same substance."

But the conclusion that the *Koran* represents "a magnificent attempt to realise the equal rights of men and women," as was recently claimed by Mohammedans, cannot be drawn from this passage, nor from a few positive commandments in the *Koran*, such as the prohibition of the evil custom, common before Mohammed's appearance, of burying female children in the desert sand. We cannot believe in such far-reaching intentions to emancipate women, if only because the Arab people, amongst whom the new religion grew up, were already living in a world of wholly patriarchal ideas. And although we cannot draw the inference that in earlier times, of which we know nothing, the matriarchal order was alien to this Semitic people, who had no history before their Islamic period—a view put forward by a Viennese school of ethnology with the theory of various "cultural spheres," and applied in particular to the Germanic peoples by the new German philosophy of race and history—yet it seems beyond doubt that Mohammed cannot possibly have aimed at a fundamental bettering of the position of women. So inopportune and exaggerated a demand would have proved injurious to the spread of his doctrine, which, after all, was his first concern.

Be that as it may, it proved fateful for the later history of Islam and for the position of Mohammedan women that the first adherents and upholders of the teaching of the merchant prophet were Arab merchants. For it was not the *Koran* that came to determine the further development of the doctrine, but the written common law, the *Shariat*, and the local customs of particular Islamic peoples, the *Adats*, that were subsequently clothed with a higher sanction. And so it is less the spirit of the *Koran* that is reflected in the development of women's position than the habits of thought and feeling among the Arab merchant middle class. In this way the class character of Mohammed's teaching assumed more and more importance, and in the eighth

and ninth centuries the whole original doctrine was transformed into a code of the ethics and conventions of the propertied section of the population, especially of the Arab merchants.

Thus MOHAMMEDAN MARRIAGE nowise represents a lifelong bond between a man and a woman sanctified by religion, but a purely COMMERCIAL CONTRACT, like any other. Only in this case the commodity is the wife. It is true that a *mullah*, a divine, is usually present at the wedding, but then his presence is also desired when other important business is concluded, and in fact he only acts as a notary.

In other respects, too, the contraction of a marriage between Mohammedan couples bears all the marks of a purely commercial purchase. As with every legal contract, witnesses are necessary, and a further condition is the consent of both parties. The bride's consent proves, indeed, an empty formality in practice, as is seen from the manner in which her consent is obtained; at best the *mullah* or his envoy repairs to the bride's home before the wedding and asks her through a locked door to give her consent to the marriage, without troubling whether the favourable answer is given by her or by another woman. Even weeping or silence is taken as consent, and at the wedding not even the bride's presence is necessary. She may be represented by any other person who exercises the right of legal guardianship over her. The consequence is that throughout the world of Islam there is nothing to hinder the EARLY MARRIAGES that are still widespread, marriages between minors, or the yet more horrible marriages between a child and an old man, CHILD MARRIAGES, that is to say. Even Mohammed married Ayesha, his favourite wife, as a child.

But a *conditio sine qua non* in every Islamic marriage is the *kalym*, that is to say the purchase price paid for the bride, as a chattel, to her family, without which there is no such thing as marriage among the Mohammedans. THUS ISLAMIC MARRIAGE AND MARRIAGE BY

PURCHASE ARE ONLY TWO NAMES FOR ONE AND THE SAME THING.

As a purely commercial contract an Islamic marriage can, of course, be dissolved at any time. But, whilst the husband has only to state his intention of divorce in any form he chooses, the wife can only obtain a divorce under quite definite conditions, on the basis of a legal pronouncement.

Another circumstance, the growing Persian influence on the development of doctrine, is a further illustration in the course of its history that the first disseminators of Islam were Arab merchants. The Arabs, who had always maintained commercial relations with Sassanid Persia, and who soon succeeded in attaching the country to their own Khalifate, became acquainted there with the customs of a people who were undoubtedly more advanced in civilization than themselves, and gradually spread their influence throughout the Islamic East.

As is always the case, it was of course only the most aristocratic and wealthy sections of Persian society whose customs and habits set a model for the Mohammedan East. And so no doubt the whole *Shariat* presents the deposit of such moral laws as a people with an ancient civilization and a great historical past transmitted to the Arab upstarts. But this circumstance is of decisive significance because in the upper classes in Persia women were wholly shut out from social life, spent their time in complete idleness, were regarded as inferiors in need of protection, indeed as barely more than objects, at least objects of luxury for the use of man.

Up to quite modern times the Islamic world was held captive by these ideas. What applied to Persian women in the early days of Islam, appears in the *Shariat*, the written common law, in the form of generally valid principles concerning woman. She exists for her husband, must serve his lusts, must be beautiful for him, and

so the law book of the Shiites, one of the two chief Mohammedan sects, contains elaborate instructions how women are to care for their bodies, deck themselves, scent and paint themselves, in order to please their husbands. There are also innumerable rules of demeanour which a woman must follow precisely, if she wishes to preserve her honour, whilst what an ambiguous word of Greek origin designates her *namus* usually serves the same purpose.

As is well known, the law of MONOGAMY holds good in the Islamic world only for women. Mohammed had nine wives, and he permitted men to have four legally acknowledged. But as there is no limit to the number of concubines and female slaves, POLYGAMY is practically unrestricted for men among Mohammedans.

It is curious, but true, that wherever and whenever men have degraded women to mere objects of lust, they have also ascribed to them an imaginary excessive sensuality and moral inferiority. Islam, too, regards women as creatures without moral stability, beings whose chastity and faithfulness must be enforced by special protective measures and zealous care in keeping away temptation. For this purpose the most effective measures are ISOLATION and the VEIL, two institutions that characterize the whole Mohammedan East, capping the system of the subjugation of women and their exclusion from the life of the community.

Neither isolation nor the veil, indeed, are traceable to Mohammed's original teaching; their rule, on the contrary, was wormed into the *Koran* at a later date by theological subterfuge; Islamic doctors interpreted a passage that clearly referred only to the Prophet's wives as a religious commandment of general validity.

Arab merchants adopted the use of the veil, a custom originally alien to Islam, from the Persian feudal nobility; it was found, not only in Persia, but even earlier in Egypt, in Assyrian Babylon—where, significantly enough, servant maids and prostitutes were forbidden

to wear the veil—and even in Christian Byzantium. It is true that there it was restricted to the upper classes, and it is therefore symptomatic that the *Koran*, also, alludes to the veil only in association with women of the aristocracy.

In general it must be remembered that, just as polygamy, in view of the universal custom of marriage by purchase, was only possible for wealthy men, so it is with the other forms of the enslavement of women in the Islamic East; the duty to cultivate beauty, isolation, and the veil are restricted to the women of the wealthy classes, the non-working women. But further, these forms of subjection are closely linked with riches and the leisure they render possible, and likewise with a settled way of life. And so the ISOLATION AND VEILING OF WOMEN, required by the *Shariat*, WERE FIRST ADOPTED IN THE CITIES OF THE ORIENT THAT HAD SPRUNG FROM TRADING CENTRES, where craft guilds began to flourish too. The first women who adopted rules hitherto only observed by the feudal nobility were the wives of the urban merchants and handicraft workers. From these they spread later to other social classes.

Thus the settled way of life and the city, trade and industry, provided the soil in which the above-mentioned forms of enslavement of women were able to develop in the Mohammedan world. The regulations of the *Shariat*, which embody these customs as religious commandments, could never, as we shall see later, be fully obeyed by the women of the poorer classes, especially by working women, nomads and peasants. And for these women the Islamic clergy have always admitted exceptions. How could a cattle-breeding nomad woman, who shared all her husband's toil and dangers, or a peasant woman, who worked all day in the fields, follow the rule of isolation and the veil? True, she could be economically oppressed and exploited, and enslaved and degraded in other ways; but certain varieties of subjection are out of the question for her.

This explains the special position that the territory of what is now Soviet Central Asia, with its predominantly nomad and to a small extent agricultural population, has always occupied in the Islamic world. Both in Turkistan and in the rest of Russian Asia, polygamy was the exception simply because the poverty of the population and the large surplus of men, especially in the Turkman territories, put a check on the institution. Bigamy, on the other hand, was comparatively common.

A second cause of these special conditions is probably, however, to be found in the general Turkification of Central Asia; for it is a historical fact that among the Turkish peoples, who were all originally nomads, women enjoyed incomparably more freedom than among other Islamic peoples. That applies even more to the warlike nomads of the late Middle Ages, the Mongols, who, as we know, have a considerable share in the ethnical composition of Central Asia. I have already mentioned that with them women were, at least, in possession of completely equal rights. The Arab Ibn Batut, who went to Astrakhan at the beginning of the fourteenth century and visited the horde of Usbeigh Khan, expresses astonishment at the respect and freedom enjoyed by the women among the "wild Turkish Tatars."

And so we find tendencies in the early days of Islam in Central Asia that were stifled by later developments. Even in our days it is a widely accepted principle among Mohammedans that women need no intellectual culture, that they ought not to learn to write at all—for they might abuse the knowledge in order to write wanton letters—and only to read so far as to be able to make out the *Koran*; yet the inscription of the oldest *Medressa* in Bukhara breathes quite a different spirit. "The effort to acquire knowledge," it declares, "is the duty of every Mohammedan man and woman."

In this matter, indeed, as in many another, conditions have so developed as to assimilate the position of women

in Central Asia to that in other Islamic countries. Consequently the lot of the women of Central Asia before the Bolshevik Revolution in the cities of Turkistan (and in Turkish Azerbaijan to this day) was in no way different from that of their enslaved sisters in the non-Russian East, and in the country or on the steppes different only in the measure occasioned by the nomad or agricultural life. I will proceed to show the precise character of that enslavement, and how it is still evinced at times, though less and less with every day.

THE WIFE AS "IMPURE"—THE DAUGHTER AS AN
"ALIEN BURDEN"

Even among the non-Islamic peoples of the Caucasus there can be no question of equality for women in the Russian East until the October Revolution of 1917. Nevertheless, we may speak of the relative freedom of women, especially in Georgia, where there are no historical proofs of their subjection. But even among the Armenians, who, in spite of their Christianity, are very patriarchal, and whose ancient civilization rivals that of Georgia, we find the position of women far less favourable, especially in those districts where the influence of Islam is stronger.

For instance, there are still cases where the older women—mothers or wives—do not share in the meals, but only wait on their menfolk as they sit at table, and withdraw repeatedly in the pauses to stand silently in a corner, awaiting further orders, with a kerchief held respectfully before their mouths. As everywhere in the East, the head of the family who is also the chief of the kindred is treated with such boundless veneration that the daughters-in-law may on no account venture to address their father-in-law, whilst the mother-in-law—whose relation to the wife in Armenian literature is similar to that she bears to the husband in Western European tradition—makes their lives a real hell,

But the position of the women among the Islamic peoples of the Caucasus in Daghestan, Chechenia, Adygeya, Ajaristan, and especially the Turks of Azerbaijan, was much worse than among the Christian Armenians. Turn where we will, we see everywhere, from the cradle to the grave, the same contempt, subjection, and lack of rights or means of escape for the female population. And this almost always in the measure in which Islam is firmly established in the various districts, whether among a Turkish or non-Turkish people. But whereas women are generally regarded in the Mohammedan world as inferior in worth and moral character, in many parts of the Russian East, and especially in Turkish Central Asia, they were further regarded as IMPURE.

For instance, it is an ancient custom that a mountaineer of the Northern Caucasus would never give his hand to a woman. If compelled by circumstances to do so, he first wrapped his arm in a cloth. So, too, a man who chanced to touch a strange woman had to wash himself from head to foot immediately, repeating prayers the while. When a man died there were generally prolonged funeral rites, with meetings for lamentation at the grave. But when a woman died it was regarded as positively improper to show any signs of loss, far less to mention it.

Among some of the Nentsis (Samoyedes) and a number of other inhabitants of the Asiatic North, women are forbidden to set foot in the honourable right half of the *yurta*, nor may they step over a male garment or reindeer yoke, nor over fishing tackle or hunting gear, for they might render them unclean by so doing.

So, too, the odium of impurity is attached to all the intimate functions of womanhood—menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth—which is the more remarkable because the blessing of a plentiful offspring is valued above everything, except with a few tribes who live under very hard conditions, and childlessness is regarded

as a woman's deepest shame. A childless woman is mocked and despised alike by her family and the neighbours. She herself is beside herself with despair and hastens from one sacred place or tomb or holy man to another, kissing the threshold and stones of the mosques. And if all that proves ineffectual, not only does her husband look about him for another wife, but she herself helps him in the search. "An unfruitful woman is hateful even to Allah"; so runs a proverb of the Turks of Azerbaijan. Or again: "Better a fruitful hen than an unfruitful woman."

Nobody in the East is struck by the illogicality, so fateful to women, of the attitude which welcomes the child, but fearfully avoids the pregnant woman, the mother in childbed, as an impure creature, and it often happens that the woman undergoes her confinement far away, outside all human habitation.

For instance, amongst the mountaineer Khevsurs (in Georgia) the expectant mother spends fully two weeks before her confinement in complete solitude in a small, dark purification hut (*ssamrevulo*), specially built for the purpose of slate, apart from the village, and hardly distinguishable from a dog-kennel. Nobody, not even her own mother or sister, may exchange a word with the woman during this time, much less help her, and she receives her food through a hole in the roof. A Russian investigator who was in Khevsuretia in 1876, describes the situation as follows:

Let the reader imagine the condition of an expectant mother in a district nearly seven thousand feet above sea level, with the mountains thickly covered in snow and the temperature at night falling not infrequently below zero. These are the conditions under which the woman must spend her nights in darkness, alone, without any kind of help, lying on a bundle of straw.

The road to the highlands of Khevsuretia, on both sides of the Central Caucasus Mountains, leads through Pshavia, where inscriptions, proverbs, and verses, of

weatherworn, are everywhere found scratched on rocks and tree-trunks. For the Pshavs, like so many of the peoples of the East, are nearly all poets, and it is a matter of course for them to celebrate the love of man and woman in verse. But until recently the women to whom these poems are dedicated gave birth to their children in a kind of stable, dark, cold, dirty, and altogether horrible. And when they died in the process, which naturally often happened, their husbands comforted themselves with the thought that, after all, it was only the "daughter of a strange house." But when one of the domestic animals gave birth to its young, it was a matter of course to bring it from the stable into the hut, especially in winter.

Among various other Caucasian mountain peoples the women were in the habit of retreating to the forest two or three weeks before their hour of trial, during which time they, also, had their food brought to them thither, and nobody might approach nearer than about twenty-five feet of them. Midwifery was, of course, out of the question, although there was a custom in various districts of pouring holy water, oil, or even vodka on a woman in labour, to soothe the pains.

Anyone who has ever seen the Soviet film *Gods Overthrown* will never forget the conditions under which the women of the Buriat Mongols formerly gave birth to their children. The first part shows how a pregnant woman is required to perform all kinds of work, however hard, and then a difficult birth is shown, with all the actions that accompany it. We see how the arms are seized ruthlessly near the hips and worked to and fro as if she were a piece of wood; then how she is placed upon a dunghill; and how the priest, the *lama*, comes and recites prayers over the woman and tries to drive the evil spirits out of her with an earsplitting din. And if all this proves ineffectual, resort is had to a sure and tried remedy: the woman, already exhausted, placed in a hard empty cart, the horse is well whipped,

and the woman in labour is driven across the steppes at a wild gallop. The result—a still-born child and blood-poisoning in the mother—seldom fails to appear, of course.

The Kalmucks, too, place women in labour on dung-hills. Among the Uzbeks they are taken into the stable above a pit filled with ashes which serves to receive the newborn child. But among the Kirghiz-Kazakhs a confinement was often a public affair. The sturdy young men of the nomad village would gather round the woman in labour in the tent and set up an ear-splitting noise in order to keep the evil spirits away from the woman. If the painful process was slow, the strongest youth generally stepped out of the circle, seized her beneath the breast from behind, and pressed her body with all his might until the child was “shaken out of her.” In the far north, where women generally give birth to their children without any help whatever, in the cold, icy, “impure *chum*”—also a special tent—they actually stand the very next day up to their knees in ice-cold sea water, helping their husbands at the fishing. But if the woman belongs to a nomad tribe that happens to be on the road, she merely stays a little behind, wraps the newcomer hastily in a reindeer skin, gets into the sledge with him, and then proceeds herself on the way. Nomad women in Central Asia, likewise, stay behind somewhere in the desert in similar cases, with a dog for their assistance, and catch up the caravan a few hours later, with the newborn child in their arms.

It is regarded as profoundly shameful to cry out in travail. “If thou art a woman, hold thy peace,” say the Chukchees, as do so many other peoples in the East. And in Yakutsk the strikingly characteristic legend of the girl is told whose living body was set before the guests, who coolly cut pieces off and ate them, whilst she bore all the torment in silence and even tried to smile gently. The Yakuts are particularly proud of this model daughter of their race, for they really do almost

believe that so, and not otherwise, it ought to be. It may readily be understood, therefore, that the women of Northern Asia, indeed of the whole East, display an iron will, and almost superhuman tenacity and strength; not a cry, not a sound, issues from their lips.

If a son is born, one who may carry on the family, and if he is actually the firstborn, then not only is he welcomed by the father and the whole kindred, but it is a festival even for the mother, whose existence is otherwise lighted by no gleam of happiness. But if a daughter arrives, hardly any notice is taken of her, although she will be a valuable object later on. The mother feels guilty, it is a day of mourning for her; the near relatives withdraw as if ashamed, and the gossiping women among the neighbours talk in whispers about the "misfortune." Hence the greeting that is common in Daghestan: "May a son be born to thee!" And there are proverbs among the Uzbeks and Turkmans and elsewhere in the Russian East: "Rather a man with a head of brass than a woman with a head of gold." "A woman is a chastisement from God." "Better throw girls into the sea than feed them." "A son is wealth, but a daughter a burden." "Girls are fed for strangers." "He looks as melancholy as if a daughter had been born to him." "Ask every morning after the man who has three daughters." "A daughter is a leaden weight." "There is never any lack of salt or of girls." And so forth.

The Buriat Mongols give no name to girls; not till they have a husband do they take his name. The Turkmans do, indeed, generally give girls very pretty, poetical names: Gul Sin—May she Smile; Ars Gul—Welcome Flower; Nersik—The Tender One; Yash Sultan—Spring. But if only girls are born in a family, they are given names of special significance, intended to encourage the next child to be a boy, "so as to make an end of the scandal." Translated, these names mean: Enough (i.e. girls); We are Disappointed; The Last Girl; But Now We Want a Boy; and so on. And if these methods still

fail, it is not uncommon for the anxious wife to beg her husband to take a new wife who may, perhaps, bear him a son.

Finally, let me quote a Turkman legend which, once more, throws light upon the attitude of the men towards women in that country:

Once upon a time there was a king whose habit it was to disguise himself at night and wander through his dominions in order to be informed of everything that concerned his subjects. On one of these nocturnal expeditions the king came upon a silversmith who was still sitting over his work. When the king asked why he took no rest, though it was already late in the night, the man replied: "Why, I must earn five whole coins every day. With one I repay an old debt; the second I lend myself; the third and fourth I need for myself and my wife, and the fifth I throw into a bottomless well."

The king could not understand the man's answer, and the silversmith explained: "The old debt is to my old father, who supported me in my youth, and whom I now have to support. The new debt is to my son, who will someday support me, when I am old. But the fifth coin, that I throw into a bottomless well, is what I spend for my daughter, who will someday leave her family and go out among strangers. . . ."

It is further significant of the degraded position of women among the Turkmans that the words used to denote "spouse," "wife," are those used to denote "slave," "concubine," and that the birth of a girl is often announced as that of "a little slave."

In view of all this we cannot wonder that the women of the East have so strong a sense of inferiority, and so great a veneration of men, that even a mother makes a profound difference from the very first day between her treatment of boys and girls. For instance, a Turkman woman will fasten the cradle hanging in the *yurta* to her foot with a long cord, so as to be able to rock it while she works. But only girls, never boys, may be treated so "disrespectfully"; masculine dignity might, so to speak, be trodden underfoot by the woman.

Even the urine of a boy is specially privileged; if he wets a carpet or rug, it is enough to pour a little water on the place and strew a little sand. But if a girl has the same misfortune, the place must be carefully washed and scrubbed three times. Altogether, a son grows up in the Turkman family like a little god, more particularly if they are well-to-do. Everything is placed at his disposal, all his wishes and whims are satisfied as far as possible; he is much better treated and dressed than his sister, is much more considered in the matter of food, and whatever he takes into his head is easily carried through.

Girls have to get used to this inequality at an early age and learn to accept it, and a girl very soon discovers that at home she is not wanted, only a temporary "guest," and will be sold into a strange family. Hence the profound and moving sadness of the Turkman girls' songs and the burden of fear that speaks in them. How often we hear the despairing lament: "Do not hurt a girl's feelings so, for she is only a guest among you. True, she sojourns among you for a little time, but soon she departs forever." Only very rarely do we catch a protest against those fathers who let their children depart among strangers:

Milk is used, and cream.
The cream is to be churned to butter,
But the eyes of the man should be put out
Who surrenders his daughter to a stranger.

For the anxious mother warns her tiny daughter against this evil "stranger" even in her lullaby:

Do not weep, my little flower, oh do not weep,
Do not attach thy soul to a stranger.
But if he do thee any injury,
Do not weep for thy home. . . .

Among the Turks of Azerbaijan a boy's cradle is constantly and carefully guarded, not only by his mother,

but also by a number of women of his kindred, from evil spirits and the evil eye, and is provided with all kinds of protective amulets. In her lullabies his mother calls him "my lord" and "my *padishah*," speaks enthusiastically of his happy future, and calls herself the "future victim of the dust beneath his feet." But nobody troubles about a girl's cradle, however pitifully she cries. Here, too, the lullabies reflect both the harsh childhood and the joyless future of the female:

Sleep, little daughter, lai, lai (refrain of a lullaby),
 Little black-eyes, lai, lai, I will sing you something . . .
 With your black eyes and the beauty on your brow,
 How I fear that you will go clad in black.

Blood streams from the mother's breast,
 Red blood, to be mocked and scorned by evil men.
 But you, sleep peacefully, lai lai, I will sing you something.

You mother will bring you up to her own sorrow,
 You will fall into the hands of an old man, a *Kaji* pilgrim.
 You will walk in velvet and brocade,
 And make beauty for the old man, the *Kaji*. . . .
 But now sleep peacefully, I will sing you something.

The different treatment of male and female children is expressed purely statistically in the proportion between the sexes, especially among the peoples of Central Asia. Whereas the number of girls born alive is usually greater than the number of boys, there, too, we generally find a marked excess of men at a later stage. Even at the present day, although the new régime works vigorously to bring about a change, there are more men than women in the whole of Central Asia. It is calculated that there are about 889 women to every thousand men, and in Turkmenia in particular the average proportion is only 80 to 100.

WOMAN AS A CHATTEL

In former days when a girl reached the age of six or eight in the villages of Azerbaijan and Daghestan,

and elsewhere in the Caucasus, she was initiated into the cares of her mother, which were kept strictly separate from those of the husband. The child had to help her mother in her work in field and garden, and perpetually fetch water from the well, which was often a long way from the village—no man ever offered to undertake the task; in short, she had to renounce her childhood, unlike her brothers at the same age, who were allowed to play, romp, or learn. The well, which was formerly the club of the Islamic women of the Caucasus, was always the meeting place where, gathered round the pitchers, people could gossip about the most intimate family affairs to their hearts' content, so that the little girls were early initiated into many of the dark places of the life of women and wives.

It was just the same in Central Asia, for instance among the Turkmans. Here, too, a female child was very soon required to renounce her carefree play and to become her mother's helpmeet in all domestic labour, especially in weaving stuffs and carpets, making felt, enbroidering, dressmaking, etc. For both the girl's parents and her purchaser were in the habit of estimating her value solely according to her ability as a worker and her physical qualities. As everywhere in the East, where sexual maturity begins early, girls in the Russo-Asiatic East, among the inhabitants of Azerbaijan, the Turkmans, Uzbeks, and Tajiks, very soon cease to be children, and are often regarded as fit for marriage at the age of eight or nine. In some districts there is, indeed, quite a special test of this maturity: "If a girl receives a blow from a fur cap, and does not fall down," says popular wisdom, "then she is ready for marriage"—for a marriage formerly settled without the girl's consent, generally without her knowledge, and sometimes by the fathers before the birth of their children.

These CHILD MARRIAGES are one of the saddest chapters in the history of womanhood throughout the East, including the Russian East. Only a few years ago the

evil custom still prevailed, especially in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, of "marrying" little girls, before their sexual maturity (sometimes even as early as the age of eight) with middle-aged and even with quite old men, because these latter were best able to pay a high *kalym* or purchase price for them. No wonder that this custom resulted in the mass dissemination of all kinds of women's and venereal diseases, and even of certain nervous diseases (due to beginning sexual intercourse at an immature age), as well as premature old age, and that the percentage of female and child mortality was terribly high, due in no small measure to this barbarous treatment. An Eastern woman who remained unmarried till she was twenty-five had no prospect of marriage. But at thirty-five she was already an old woman, and one still meets with women who look aged with those years.

But what was formerly understood by marriage, a contract of marriage, in the Islamic Russian East?

In discussing the position of women under Islam I pointed out that marriage was no sacred act, but a pure matter of business in which the girl was sold to the man on quite definite conditions. There was no religious ceremony at the marriage, and from the moment in which the *mullah* or his deputy read the contract, previously agreed upon, in the presence of the bridegroom and the relatives of both parties, and the bride, as a mere outward formality, was asked whether she consented to the marriage, she was the LEGALLY ACQUIRED PROPERTY OF THE HUSBAND.

For until recently people regarded WOMEN AS A CHATTEL in the East, especially in Central Asia, just like any other: like wool, cattle, corn, or silk. And when people talked of market prices you might often hear: "Camels are cheaper, but women are dearer." The Turks of Azerbaijan would say: "A girl is a foreign commodity." Or again: "Her bridegroom's chattel." The inquiry to whom a girl was engaged was expressed in the form:

"To whom do the goods belong?" And in general it is said in the East: "A cow cannot choose her drinking pool, nor a girl her husband." And: "You can give away a horse, but only sell a daughter." And so on. Among the Yakuts it was customary until recently not only to sell women for marriage in the market, but little girls from the age of one to ten years, along with agricultural products, for three roubles, or a *pud* of flour (about 35 lbs.), or a *pud* and a half of butter. And these children were handed over stark naked, only wrapped in hay and packed in a sack of hareskin, like parcels.

Moreover, the *kalym*, the bride-price, which even the new régime has not been able to abolish altogether in the Soviet East, is closely bound up with the tribal order, in which a woman is absolutely dependent upon a man—her father, brother, or husband—and is regarded as an inseparable part of that community. But if one family cedes a woman to another, and so loses a valuable worker, the appropriate compensation must be paid.

But since women are regarded as chattels, the relation between supply and demand mainly determines the price. According to the district and the woman's youth, beauty, and capacities—and in no small measure according to the chattel's lineage—the prices formerly varied between twenty-five and fifty roubles, or between fifteen hundred and two thousand, or even more; but these prices were generally calculated in terms of animals—horses, oxen, cows, sheep, reindeer, or camels—or of grain, textiles, household implements, etc. In Kazakhstan, for instance, a rich Kazakh formerly paid as much as fifty large animals for a wife. And the more skilful a Turkman woman was in weaving beautiful carpets, the greater was her value. In some district widows, as being experienced workers, cost more than unmarried girls. And if a man were not able to pay the whole *kalym* at once, he was sometimes allowed to pay in instalments spread out over years. The girls waited meantime in their parents' house.

But however various the amount of the purchase price and the manner of paying it among the different peoples, it served everywhere in the same degree to exploit the poorer classes. And where the Old Testament custom prevailed that a man should serve a girl's parents for a number of years as payment for her, frequent cases occurred in which the bridegroom served from ten to fifteen years to earn his wife, and yet she was sold to someone else and the bridegroom was sent empty away.

Since the young wife represented an additional pair of hands, not only for her husband, but also for his family, it sometimes happened, among the Bashkirs, for instance, or in the Caucasus, that the kindred not only came to the assistance of the bridegroom, who had many other expenses on the occasion of his marriage (presents, festivals, etc.), but actually advanced the *kalym* for him. Among the Chechens the expenses of a wedding were generally so great that whole farms were sometimes ruined by them. And among the Kurds living on the Turkman-Persian frontier, where girls are sold at ten or twelve to the highest bidder, the man still gives everything that he has of value: his horse, his donkey, his *pallasses* (mural hangings), his services, and even the loan granted him for the improvement of his farm, in order to procure a wife. And then, when he is utterly impoverished, and calls nothing his own but a little black-eyed girl, his wife, he says: "She, at least, belongs to me. I will kiss her when I like, and beat her when I like. And if I have a wife, I shall secure a house and everything else in time."

The situation of the marriageable Mohammedan woman of the Caucasus, especially in Turkish Azerbaijan, was pitiful enough, but that of the Central Asian woman, who was the object of speculation in some parts, was even more so. It was not uncommon among the Turkmans in former days that a man who had "married" in one place and paid the *kalym* for the wife, re-sold her in another place for a much higher price.

But this evil custom was partly due in Turkmenia to the fact that in those parts, where agriculture is inextricably bound up with the water supply and the struggle for water really is a struggle for existence, the common law prescribed until recently that only married men were regarded as enjoying equal rights in the kindred or rural community, and only they, therefore, had a claim to water and land. In consequence every Turkman aimed at marrying as early as possible, so that the women, who were in any case in the minority, were greatly sought after and their price exceptionally high.

Every *bey*, large landowner, cattle-breeder, or wholesale merchant, who was easily able to pay the *kalym* for several girls at once, hastened to marry his son immediately, though he were only three or four years old, in order to secure, in this way, the appropriate share of water and land, so that he naturally became richer than ever. But for the poorer people this MARRIAGE CLAIM TO WATER constituted one of the chief sources of never-ending dependence and servitude. How was it possible for a man of small means to save the necessary *kalym* to obtain wives for his sons? So he hired them as servants to his rich neighbour, where they were usually shamelessly exploited. And many of these men had to work hard till late in life in order to be able to marry at last.

But further, a system of BARTER flourished, especially in Turkmenia. That is to say, if a man were not able to pay *kalym* for his son, he exchanged his own sister or daughter for another woman whom he gave to his son for a wife. There is a similar system of wife barter in Northern Asia, mainly among the Chukchees, in which the question of age is wholly ignored. *Bogoras* tells of a boy of two who was married to a woman of twenty, because his mother had died and the family needed female labour. After a time the woman had a child by a partner in the group marriage, of which I shall speak

later. And so she suckled two children at once, her little son and her husband, for in those parts children are given the breast till they are five or six.

In her beautiful *Legend of the Steppes*, A. Nukhrat whom I have already quoted, tells the story of the antecedents of such a *kalym* marriage among the nomad Kazakhs of Central Asia; the Kazakh woman Alma, sorely tried and prematurely old, tells the story of her life to her companions gathered at night around the camp fire:

Thirty-two times the steppes have been covered with snow, and thirty-two times with fresh, green grass, since I can remember. I do not know exactly how old I am, for I can count only thirty-two summers and winters. The birth of a Kazakh child was nowhere registered, so that no Kazakh knows his exact age.

I was the only daughter in my family. My parents had three sons besides me, my three elder brothers. And so I was a favourite little plaything in the family. My mother loved me dearly, and even my brothers spoiled me, whilst my father, who was not very genial in a general way, would place his hand on my head and say gaily: "I have a beautiful daughter growing up; she will bring in a large *kalym*."

I was especially fond of my little brother Rakhimbay. He would carry me in his arms oftener than my other brothers and hunt for plants and roots that tasted good for me on the steppes; he hunted steppe eagles and other birds so as to give me pretty feathers for my cap, which, as my mother then thought, were a protection from the evil eye.

Ah, yes, I loved Rakhimbay dearly, and I still like to remember the mischief we got into together, and especially our nomad wanderings. When our *aul* pitched their tents anywhere, we always began to gambol like young foals. He was eight years older than I and had a spirited little horse of his own on which he rode about on the steppes alone by the time he was seven or eight, and when we were on the move he circled round the caravan like a tempest.

During one of these moves the storm broke for me. I can only count eight winters till the day when my father, on his return from the fair at Kara Kalin, said curtly to mother that she was to prepare for guests in the next few days; he had already promised

his daughter to somebody, and the bridegroom's parents would shortly come with him.

I remember that my mother made no reply, but shook her head and murmured to herself: "Isn't it too early?" But my father took no notice of her; he lay down on the felt mat and I was told to bring him what he needed for washing his hands. I understood hardly anything of their talk, and the little anxiety I felt passed away at once when my father took a length of shining red velvet out of his saddle-bag that he had brought for me for a *kamsol* (tunic).

Shortly afterwards the guests arrived: a youngish couple with a boy about two years older than me. As soon as my father saw the approaching guests he told me to hide and ordered my mother to receive them. I withdrew to my uncle's *yurta* and began at once to play with my little cousin Nagima, who could not yet talk . . . and just as we were rolling and romping on the soft felt mat and laughing loudly, my mother hurried into the *yurta* and threw me a new frock. Her face expressed joyful excitement, and she seemed particularly young and pretty to me that day. I could not contain myself, but threw myself into her arms to say for the hundredth time that she was the loveliest mother in the world and that I loved her dearly; but she pushed me away and told me to make haste and put on the frock. . . . She dressed me in it hurriedly, then spat on her hand and drew it across my hair, touching my plaits that gave forth a silvery sound; and then we heard voices outside the *yurta* and several women appeared at the door, drawing aside the hanging mat. One of them, a short, fat woman with a puffy face, was a stranger. Her little eyes gazed at me coldly, and she sat down with an air of importance upon the cushions and rugs that my aunt had hastily spread out. The other women took seats, each in accordance with her position.

For a brief moment there was silence in the *yurta*; everybody waited for the guest to open the conversation. I gazed searchingly at the woman, at her dress richly embroidered with silver and her *kamsol*, her soft yellow boots peering forth from beneath the hem of her dress, at her whole strange and unpleasant appearance; and I felt a spasm of foreboding. I leaned against my mother's knee.

"Come here, little beauty, and let me give you a kiss," I suddenly heard in a voice that was sickly sweet.

I was more frightened than ever, and hid my face in my mother's breast. But already willing hands were tearing me from her and pushing me towards the woman. She took my chin in her short, sweaty fingers, raised my flushed face, looked straight into my eyes, and kissed my mouth with her cold, damp lips. Then she turned away from me as if she had wholly forgotten my existence, and began to talk of quite different things with the other women.

"... We've good fodder on the steppes this year, praise be to Allah. . . ." she piped with her sickly sweet voice, whilst they spread a cloth with a red pattern before her, and placed butter, cheese, and dishes of mutton upon it. "The sheep are fattening nicely, praise and thanks be to Allah, and have thick, pure wool, that our women will be given to poll. My *bey*—may Allah give him another hundred years' life—is very well pleased. And I am glad too, though it is impossible to count our sheep. Once I tried to in hundreds, and I counted as many hundreds as I have fingers on my hands . . . but I couldn't count further. How can anyone count without their fingers? And there were many, many more. Only the *bey* knows how many beasts he has, but I know that we shall have enough *kalym* whenever we want to marry our sons."

They all listened to the woman with obvious veneration, shaking their heads and clicking their tongues in sign of admiration, without turning their eyes from her greedily working mouth.

The women sat around the guest for a long time, talking about her husband's wealth, the characteristics of his wives and children, about the recent fair, about weddings, births, and newborn children, about sickness and quacks—in short about everything that women can talk about who have never, even in their dreams, seen anything but the boundless steppes, sheep, *kumyss* (a drink made from mare's milk), and their bronzed, fat-paunched offspring.

It was already half dark when Rakhimbay called our mother out and told her that the guest of honour, Mullanur Bey, wanted to leave, and was asking for his *Bey Bicha* (eldest wife).

And so the guests left. And this was the first day on which I came to know tears and the bitterest sorrow.

Hardly had our guests vanished into the dusk, when Rakhimbay crept up to me, as I stood hidden behind my uncle's *yurta*; he plucked at my dress and motioned me silently out to the steppes.

I followed him, my heart swelling with fear and my eyes full of tears. I understood nothing of what was happening, but my heart was heavy and sad. Rakhimbay, however, understood more than I did, and he embraced me and began to stroke my hair tenderly. I began to cry, and he did the same. And so we sat in the grass crying for a long time, close together, and he told me everything. He had been there whilst Mullanur Bey had been haggling with my father over the *kalym*, and when the price was finally agreed upon after long debate (forty sheep, ten horses, five cows, and fifty roubles in money), and when they settled the date for the final payment of the *kalym* and the wedding. . . .

It was not till later that I heard how, after a successful day at the fair, my father and Mullanur Bey had sat together somewhere or other, and had liked one another so well that they gradually came to the resolution to seal the newly made friendship at once in some form. After prolonged effusions of friendship the pair discovered that they could marry their children to one another; what matter that they were too young? It was all the easier to pay the *kalym*, and besides, there was all the more time to consolidate a friendship that had blazed up with such startling speed.

In the course of several years the *kalym* was paid, and I was barely fourteen, according to my mother's calculation, when the wedding was celebrated amidst clamorous noise, and my head covered with the white band of the married woman.

Never shall I forget my life during my brief marriage, for which everybody envied me. My father-in-law really was one of the richest men on the steppes. He really did possess countless herds of sheep, horses, and cows, and a large number of servants—relations, nearer or more distant—and likewise a large family; he had three wives, six sons, and one daughter. The four elder sons were already married. The family lived in six tents. We young married people were given a tent with the younger brother, and there I hung a beautiful curtain across a corner and spread out my cushions and carpets.

The whole household was in the hands of the *Bey Bisha*, Mullanur Bey's eldest wife. She ruled the other wives and the daughters-in-law severely, and the servants and their wives feared her more than the *bey* himself. . . . She detested me from the first day.

"How she fixes her shameless eyes on the men, how she stares about her! . . . What delicate, white little fingers she has, how tender she is, how she likes sleeping. . . . You can see at once that she has grown up as an only daughter and has been spoiled. Lazy-bones, sweet-tooth, pilferer!" She hissed at me in a voice of hatred when no stranger was near.

She imposed only the hardest work on me, and sent me out of doors to work in the mud, especially when it was cold, even when it froze hard. And if I dressed rather more warmly on such occasions, she immediately mocked me before the servants' wives: "Do you think your pink cheeks might get frost-bitten, daughter of idleness, wretched beggar?" she shouted at me. Whatever I did, however hard I worked, nothing pleased her, she always found cause to scold me, mock at me, and make my life a hell upon earth. . . .

This is only a quotation from the history of a marriage by purchase among the Kazakhs, but it is characteristic of what is customary almost everywhere in the East. Only in the Caucasus, where, with the exception of Azerbaijan, the young people had opportunities to know one another, even in former days, in spite of a rigid code (the winter evenings were sociable and the girls and boys sat in the same room, though separated from one another, and opened their hearts to one another by means of expressive glances), love marriages were sometimes contracted, and at the same time—far more often than elsewhere in the East—in the form of MARRIAGES BY CAPTURE.

PATRIARCHAL MARRIAGE

MARRIAGE BY CAPTURE was closely allied with marriage by purchase, and was fairly widespread in the Russian East. If a man could not pay the *kalym* for a wife, she was carried away by force. It is true that in latter years these marriages by capture had become less frequent in a general way. But the difficulty of eradicating them in the Caucasus was partly due to the fact that markedly manly qualities, such as courage, daring, strength,

and bravery, have always been greatly admired there, and that the women in particular regarded them as the highest virtues, most worthy of love.

This ideal was particularly marked among the Chechen women, who even dared sometimes to reject a man, and who have the following characteristic song:

I do not want a husband, mother,
Who trades in oil and wood.
I do not talk, mother,
Of a youth who
Is finely dressed and slender in the waist.
I only say, mother, that he whom I love
Is dressed in rags,
And is as shaggy as a wolf
Whose skin is dropping from his flesh.
I speak only of him
Whose face is the colour of steel,
But whose heart is as a wolf's.
I speak only of him
Who moves restlessly to and fro
On the River Terek
In the blackest night
As a lone wolf.

And now, how did one of these marriages by capture proceed? If, for instance, a Kabard, a member of a Cherkess tribe whose inherited code formerly dominated far beyond the bounds of the Northern Caucasus, resolved to marry a girl whom he had already chosen, the typical plan of campaign for the capture was devised. He assembled his friends, armed and mounted like himself, and went with them to a place where the girl was bound to pass on the way to the well, or elsewhere. There he remained in hiding till the girl of his choice came in sight. The man then swung her on to his saddle with a firm grip and the booty was carried to his relatives or friends in a wild gallop. If the bitterly offended parents of the bride did not immediately give chase—and that was seldom of much use—the bride's

whereabouts was kept secret until mutual negotiations led to an agreement.

It is true that in recent decades marriage by capture had become little more than a form; the bride knew exactly where and by whom the capture would take place, and generally gave her consent in advance, and the marriage was usually celebrated by proxy in the absence of the bride and bridegroom.

The Cherkesses did not so often sell their daughters against the latters' will; girls might even choose their own bridegroom, but if the parents found a richer man who could pay a larger *kalym* they often themselves helped him to capture the girl. In such a case the insult to the deserted bridegroom was a cause of vendetta.

Comparatively poor men favoured marriage by capture in the Caucasus, simply because it meant a smaller *kalym*. For after a single night spent away from her parents' house the girl was regarded as the legal wife of her abductor, and the *kalym* was fixed afterwards by arbitration.

Although marriage by capture is rare nowadays, yet we find on all hands symbolic relics of the once widespread custom. This seems indicated by the prescribed refusal of Turkman and Kalmuck brides, who hide themselves, run away, cry and wail (perhaps in bitter earnest) during the wedding ceremony, and are finally carried away by a mounted representative of the bridegroom, to be delivered to their future husbands laid crosswise over the saddle.

In Northern Asia, too, among the Yakuts, it seems that marriage by capture preceded marriage by purchase as the universal custom; we find sufficient indications of this state in the folk songs and sagas, where the heroes invariably secure their wives by violence. Many of their marriage customs still bear traces of this usage, which was at first adopted even by the Russian conquerors, to the fury of the natives. Among the Chukchees

of the tundra about fifty years ago the women were likewise captured and carried to their husbands' tents, bound hand and foot. Bogoras tells of a case in the tundra of Kalym which occurred there during his exile, that is, about the turning of the century.

The Chukchees, moreover, still practise GROUP MARRIAGE, which sometimes embraces as many as ten couples. The men of the group are called "companions in wives," and each one of these "companions" has an unquestioned right to the wives of the others. If he visits one of his marriage companions, the master of the house yields him his place, and he himself prefers to spend the night, not at home, but out with his herd. It is true that he then seeks an opportunity to pay a return visit. As a rule the people belonging to such a marriage group are well known to one another, neighbours and relatives, but in no case brothers. It is most usual for these groups to embrace cousins, male and female. Russian women who marry Chukchees and live in the tundra are likewise compelled to submit to the rules of group marriage. One of these Russians, an elderly woman, once declared to Bogoras: "My husband has never yielded me to common people, only to better class men, the very best."

Similarly a kind of group marriage seems to have been customary not long ago among the Urotes of the Altai district in Western Siberia, where the wife was the property of the whole kindred, so that the conception of fatherhood was altogether unknown; only so can we account for the fact that their language has no word for father, and that son and daughter are replaced by child and girl. Here, therefore, group marriage constituted a sort of POLYANDRY.

In addition to POLYGAMY which, as I have already said, was less frequent in the Russian East than in the rest of Asia (it was only found among exceptionally wealthy merchants and the higher class of priests), BIGAMY predominated in the middle classes for economic reasons.

The poorer people, on the other hand, remained monogamous, or even celibate. Polygamy and bigamy naturally took a variety of forms. Sometimes the wives were equal in the family, but there was generally an "elder" wife whom the others, sometimes younger than her own children, had to obey. The husband, however, had authority over them all and exploited them beyond measure as cheap labour both in the house and on the land—in Northern Asia likewise in hunting and fishing; he himself not infrequently lived a life of idleness.

Hence it constantly happened among the nomad Turkmans and Kazakhs, where the women had particularly hard domestic work, that the first wife herself begged her husband to take a second to help her, and went in search of one with his permission.

DIVORCE was formerly one of the most difficult undertakings for a woman in the East; indeed, it was practically impossible. It was all the easier for the husband, for whom it involved hardly any formalities; he could simply dismiss his wife at any time, without the smallest compensation, could drive her from the house, and therewith the marriage was regarded as dissolved. The Cherkess husband even demanded the return of the *kalym* by the wife's parents in case of a divorce. It is true that the divorce could only be decreed on the ground of guilt in one of the spouses, and if the husband was unable to prove the wife's guilt, it was not necessary to refund the *kalym*. But under no circumstances might the wife take her children with her after the divorce; they had invariably to remain with the husband, and she could only keep her infant until it no longer needed the breast.

But since a divorced woman was regarded in the East as an outcast from society, with no prospect of re-marriage, and a return to her parents' house was equally impossible, the wretched being was irrevocably lost. It is not without reason, therefore, that there is a proverb in the East, where there are no independent,

unmarried women: "Better a bad husband than a good father." Or again: "It is hard to be a serving maid, to contract smallpox, to have a bad husband, but it is hardest of all to remain single." And so most divorced women in the East have preferred to make an end of their own lives.

But the lot of a widow was no less pitiful in most parts of the Russian East than that of a divorced wife, although the Indian custom of widow-burning was unknown there. For the authority of the husband, and his right of disposal over his wife, generally continued beyond the grave, especially in the case of women who came of poor families and were sold to elderly men.

A. Tomudskaya Burovaya tells the following story of what happened in a Turkman *aul*. A rich old man died, leaving a beautiful wife of eighteen and a little son. He had several grown-up sons by his former wives, and these had children of their own already; they all lived together as one large family. The young widow, whose guardianship fell according to custom either to her father or her brothers, came of a very large family, and her *aul* was at some distance. The father was all the less in haste to fetch his daughter because the *Shariat* decrees that a widow is to remain four months and ten days in her husband's house, so that it may be ascertained that she is not pregnant. (Some women prolonged the period even to as much as three or four years, out of respect for their husbands.) After some time Bibi Soltan's, the young widow's, little son died, so that there was nothing more to attach her to the family, and she did not leave them only because her own relatives did not trouble about her, and she had no right to set forth independently.

One day a rumour was spread abroad in the *aul* that the young widow, Bibi Soltan, had taken refuge the night before with young Ashur, who was already married and lived in the same *aul*, and that the *mullah* had actually married them. In less than no time the sons and relatives

of the old man who had died, men and women, all armed, surrounded Ashur's *kibiika* or tent and demanded that the fugitive should be handed over to them. Ashur, whose few relatives were just then absent at work, shut himself in with his two wives. But the aggressors did not yield; they shouted indignantly that they would be avenged on the transgressor who had dared to dispose of herself, and so had sullied the honour of the whole *aul*. In reality, of course, they were only concerned for the cheap labour that they were determined not to give up. Ashur resisted till the frenzied multitude tore down the felt sides of the *kibiika* with knives and sabres. And now they had attained their object; they all rushed at the young woman and began to belabour her furiously. To the very last Ashur's first wife defended the newcomer heroically; for it was a question of her husband's honour, whom they were trying to rob of his legal wife! But it was useless; the mob dragged their bloodstained victim, kicking and beating her, to the house of her dead husband. There she was thrust into a dark cellar, given a thorough "lesson" once more, and afterwards married to a relative of the family, a cripple. But Ashur, who was poor, and therefore defenceless, had to yield, for everybody was indignant at what he had done. Bibi Soltan's father, who turned up at last, received a fresh *kalym* for his daughter, and returned home well content. There are hundreds of such cases in Turkmenia alone.

In other cases, among various Turkman tribes and generally in the East, the LEVIRATE applied to widows; that is to say, a wife was passed on to the elder or younger brother of her dead husband. This custom, likewise, was closely connected with the tribal order and *kalym*. As most of the marriages contracted were exogamous, that is to say, the wife belonged to another kindred, and frequently the *kalym* could only be raised with the help of the kindred, she remained the property of the family even after her husband's death. Like all other

personal property, but especially because she was a tried worker, her brother-in-law inherited her, whether he were married or single. "If an elder brother dies, he leaves for heritage—his wife; but if a horse dies, he leaves for heritage—his hide." Such is the wisdom of the Kalmucks. A recently discovered document from the ancient archives of the new Republic of Kazakhstan throws a still harsher light on the institution of the levirate; in those archives countless similar heart-rending human documents concerning the pre-revolutionary history of women in the Russian East await publication. In the present case a Kirghiz Kazakh woman, Unga Korneunova, made the following petition to the magistrate of the Lepsinsky district in the year 1899:

My father married me to the Mambatna Kirghiz, Kapdolda Jumatayev, who died a few years ago. After his death I appealed to the District Headman, who gave me permission to marry again whomsoever I liked. Since then I have lived with my parents. But one day the brothers of my dead husband turned up—Igembay and Badilda—accompanied by the village headman, Assambay, and dragged me away from my family by force, tore off my clothes on the road, in spite of severe cold, led me to their house on foot, and forced me to marry Badilda. Further, these Kirghiz, to prevent my flight, burned me with red-hot iron beneath the back, making a wound that a doctor can see.

As late as 1918 a case occurred in a Cherkess *aul* of a young wife who was forced to marry her husband's eldest brother after his death; the brother was a consumptive of over seventy. But since the marriage between the old, dying man and the fresh young woman could not last long under the new conditions, she appealed for a divorce in 1920. A Court of Honour, consisting of elderly and much respected men in the *aul*, the "elders," whose duty it was to judge the appeal, and who were guided solely by Mohammedan law, gave their judgment in favour of the old man. And so the Soviet authorities had then to intervene vigorously

before they succeeded in asserting the young woman's right and liberating her from the old man.

In a case of MATRIMONIAL UNFAITHFULNESS, the mere suspicion of which is enough in the Islamic world to bring a woman to the brink of the grave, these *Shariat* Courts would punish the woman most severely, and not even shrink from the death penalty. In the Northern Caucasus it used to be the custom to fling women who sinned against the *Adat*, the unwritten common law, from a steep rock into a gorge. Or they were bound to a "black stone" and everybody in the *aul* might spit in their faces. In such cases among the Kirghiz Kazakhs the husband bit his wife's nose off, or drove her from his house like a dog. Among the Turkmans, too, an unfaithful wife was condemned to die. The men sentenced the "criminal" on the spot, and on occasion even a son did not hesitate for a moment to pass heavy sentence on his own mother.

Yet we may observe what contrasts are found in close proximity in the territories of the Soviet Union when we learn that there are peoples who allow premarital relations between boys and girls without question, and are even pleased if children arrive, as a proof of the girl's fertility. With some peoples, for instance, the Buriat Mongols and Nentsis (Samoyedes), this is probably a relic of group marriage. These peoples, moreover, know nothing of jealousy, they do not recognize unfaithfulness in marriage, but neither do they know love as we understand it; of the Giliaks, on the other hand, living in the far north of Asia on the River Amur, where considerable freedom also prevails in sexual matters, it is reported that they formerly not infrequently committed suicide for love, in cases where the lovers belonged to certain kindred who might not intermarry. The unhappy couples would hang themselves, so it was said, on two trees side by side in the forest, still singing songs to one another in which they celebrated their love and their journey into the Beyond.

MAN AS THE "YOUNGER GOD"

But the reputed love poetry of the Giliaks only constitutes an exception in the great chorus of the peoples of the Russian East, in which women hardly ever knew any really deep love for a man. Indeed, how could it have been possible in the past? For example the Turkmans have a proverb which says: "A woman has two gods: a senior god in heaven and a younger one on earth." "The younger god" is generally in the Turkman language a designation for the notion "man." How very instructive it must have seemed to the native girls that at the wedding ceremony the bridegroom was given a whip—as the symbol of his manhood and power, which was now to make itself felt in the household.

And many other wedding customs in the East must be interpreted as a symbolical expression of the man's dominion over his wife. At the end of 1935 I attended a wedding in an *aul* near Ashqabad, celebrated according to the ancient rites, such as are become rarer and rarer at the present time. It is the custom there for the bridegroom to repair in the evening to the tent where the bride, still veiled, awaits him behind a curtain on a couch ready prepared, whilst the other women, and even the children, watch the meeting of the young couple through the gaps between the curtains. They were kind enough to invite me too, as a guest, through the medium of my guide, to take my place by the curtain. But I contented myself with letting eye-witnesses describe to me the proceedings, infinitely degrading to the women, which now began, and which made a characteristic initiation into married life.

What happens is that the "younger god" gives his young wife practical instruction in her position and her new duties, and that from the first moment, so that she may yield to no illusions. First he requires her to take off his boots. She obeys and tries to carry out his commands, but she has the greatest difficulty, for her husband

bends his toes now upwards, now downwards, and so makes the task exceedingly hard for her. But the longer her unsuccessful efforts last, the more amusement there is for the invisible, but keenly interested, audience, and the louder is the laughter round the tent. When that part of the programme is at last completed, the same game begins with undoing the husband's girdle, and here the procedure is exactly the reverse of what takes place among the Cherkesses in the Caucasus. There the bridegroom, who is expected to exert absolute authority, often struggles for hours to unfasten his bride's slimming corset, a task which is not always easy even for her, and which probably indicates a relic of matriarchy; but here the bridal night is ushered in by an action of strongly patriarchal character.

During the first days after the wedding the young wife must sit at her sewing behind a curtain, surrounded by other women and children, with whom, however, she may not exchange a word. During this time she cannot even eat enough food, because custom demands that she shall leave the tent only twice a day, even for the purpose of relieving nature; once before sunrise and once before sunset. But since there are no conveniences in the *auls*, and it is necessary to go some distance for the purpose, the young wife is always conducted thither by a crowd of girls and children.

And now her "new life" begins. A newly married Turkman woman, and with slight differences also a Kazakh, Uzbek, or Kalmuck woman, etc., is forbidden for years to address the parents and the older male relatives of her husband, under threat of the severest penalties beyond the grave and of public disgrace. Neither may she appear before them with her mouth uncovered. Any communication must be made with the help of third parties, and even then in a whisper. The wife is forbidden to talk even to her own husband in the presence of the elder members of the family. So long as the couple live with his parents, they never go

out together, and even later, when they live apart and appear among the people, the husband walks or rides ahead and the wife follows a few paces behind. Only for longer distances is she allowed to ride behind him.

Whenever strange men come to the tent, before whom the young Turkman wife may not appear unveiled, she must sit in her corner and shiver, with her face to the wall, for the fireplace is in the middle. But as the living-room is always common to all, and there is always somebody in the tent before whom she may not appear, a woman must always remain veiled. She cannot, therefore, go about her work in comfort or take a little rest, much less wash or tidy herself. Even the prescribed ritual ablutions at certain times must be performed before daybreak outside the *aul* in the open air at all times of year, in order to be seen by no one. And so we come to understand the sad songs in which Turkman girls take leave of their mothers before their entry into the new family, although later they may not even complain of the beatings they receive:

See, the stone was lost and fell
To the bottom of the well.
Mother, thou in evil hour
Me in strangers' hands didst sell.

Late my needle from my hand
Slipped and vanished in the sand.
I shall never see my friend,
Shall die afar in alien land.

Lovely by the wayside, see,
Stands a slender almond tree.
If it withers thou wilt grieve,
Little grieveest thou for me.

With juice the melon overflows,
A lonely captive Anna goes,
Pining for her village home,
Sapped her strength by many woes.

With burning midday heat oppress,
Nowhere coolness, nowhere rest—
Mother, who hast sold thy child,
I thy gloomy house detest.

As with the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Kalmucks, so with the Turkmans, husband and wife might never call one another by their real names, which may be explained by the idea that it would have destroyed the husband's prestige. It was regarded as presumptuous on the part of the wife merely to utter her husband's name. Hence married couples gave one another special names: the husband spoke of his wife in the third person as "housewife," or "mother of my son," or "rich bride." If he wanted to speak to her directly he just said: "Hi-a-hi!" as he might to a dog. Moreover, in the Turkman language you can say "captive," or "slave," instead of "wife," whilst the Kazakhs are even less ceremonious, and say "speaking animal." In Yakutsk the word "woman" is a term of opprobrium. In Arabic, the official language of the secular and religious culture of the Turkistan of former days, the word *arvat* is used to designate "woman," meaning nakedness, nudity, something that must on all accounts be veiled and concealed.

Accordingly the ISOLATION, the confinement of Mussulman women prescribed by the *Shariat*, was hardly anywhere so strictly enforced as in certain districts of old-time Turkistan. What was called *harem* and *enderum* in other Mohammedan countries, the special women's chamber, bore the name *ichkari* in these parts, and was seldom absent even in quite poor houses. But the commandment to wear the VEIL was enforced even more ruthlessly; like the Osmanli women before Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's reform and the Persian women before the new decree of Riza Shah Pehlevi, the Islamic women of the Russian East wore a large, thin kerchief, the *chadra*, with which they covered their faces as far

as the eyes, or sometimes only their mouths. But this *chadra* was not worn by all Mohammedan women, only by the Turks of Azerbaijan and the women of the neighbouring southern Daghestan and of Ajaristan. The mountaineer women of the rest of Daghestan, of the Northern Caucasus and the Pamir, for instance, knew nothing of the veil. Nor was it imposed upon the nomad women of the Kirghiz Steppe, Turkmenia, and Kazakhstan who, for obvious reasons, were not so strictly isolated as the women of the settled peoples. In the country, too, where the women had to work in the fields, the obligation was not so strictly observed as in the towns. The Bashkir women, by the way, had only to veil themselves before their fathers-in-law, and the Chuvash women were only required to conceal their hair and their feet.

But the relatively harmless veil or covering of Mussulman women is much better known than another custom, the wearing of the *paranja*, still sometimes worn in Uzbekistan and in the plains of Tajikia. First the woman's face is covered with a thick, rough, black horsehair net, the *chachvan*, like a sieve, without even holes for the eyes. Sometimes a second black veil is hung over this net, and then a *khalat*, a long, wide cloak with excessively narrow sleeves, is placed straight upon the head, not on the shoulders. Even with the thermometer at 120 the feet are confined in long boots reaching to the knees, to which are attached a kind of leather golosh below. A woman dressed in a *paranja*, therefore, looks like a ghost, a walking dark-room, whose formless, repulsive silhouette contrasts incomprehensibly and horribly with the brilliant, sun-drenched bazaars and squares of Samargand, Tashkent, and Bukhara, and with the gay, coloured costumes of the men. The natural consequence of these "moonless nights" is a profound inner depression.

Amongst most of the peoples of Central Asia men and women never eat together, and never the same

food. The women always received the last fragments. The Kazakh men even licked the bones bare and only then gave them to the women, who were always hungry, and who seized them eagerly and gnawed at them still more. *Amur Ssanan*, a new writer risen from the lowest of the Kalmucks, who pictures in moving words the former sufferings of his fellow tribesmen and the two-fold sufferings of the oppressed Kalmuck women, tells in his famous book, *The Son of Mudryoshka*, how the wife generally sleeps on the bare floor beside her husband's bed. If he wakes first, he shouts at his wife: "Ui boss!" If there is no answer, he immediately makes his meaning clearer; without rousing himself, he thrusts one foot from out of the many fur coverings and kicks his wife vigorously; "Boss!" But then he withdraws his foot in a flash, turns to the wall, and goes to sleep again.

When the tea is made, his wife wakes him gently: "Get up, your tea is ready for you." A Kalmuck wife all her life addresses her husband with the formal third person plural, but he never so addresses her. A daughter-in-law must rise when older men enter the tent or leave it, and in moving about in it she must always keep her back to the door.

Among the Kalmucks, moreover, the prohibition of the utterance of names goes so far that even words with the same initial letter as the names of elder male relatives must be pronounced in a different tone from other words. There are various words and names that a woman may not speak at all. *Amur Ssanan* tells about these customs, too:

Once there lived a Kalmuck with "the name" Galun Goosc. Of course he owned a Kalmuck woman who was forbidden to utter his name, as being the eldest of the kindred. Once when she was required, as usual, to offer vodka to her husband's guests, singing loudly the while, she had somehow to avoid the word "goose." How did she manage it? "The bird that bears the name of the sister-in-law's eldest brother-in-law."

If we tried to trace the endless variety of ways in which male love of domination displays itself towards women in the East, we should never be done. Let me complete the picture with a little collection of male "proverbs," which tell their own story without any commentary.

Forty women have less sense than one cockerel.

A woman without a husband is like a horse without a bridle.

As mountains are never free from mist, so is no woman free from suspicion.

If a woman is foolish, let your *nagaika* be thick.

Beat your wife three times a day, and if you have not the strength to do so, then at least beat the earth upon which she sat.

The cunning of a single woman makes load enough for forty asses.

If your wife is malicious, of what good is peace among the people? If your shoe pinches you, of what good is the length and breadth of the world?

It takes ten women to make one hen. . . . But if the hen had any sense, how could it eat dung?

The world is a man's house, the house is a woman's world.

There is only one God in this world, but man is a second for woman.

Long hair, short measure of sense.

Ride a donkey, and your feet have no rest; marry two wives, and your ears have no rest.

A horse that eats well is a gift of God, but a wife that eats well is a curse from God.

A woman's craftiness is enough to load forty asses.

If a true believer needs counsel, let him ask the *mullah*; if the *mullah* is not there, then his father, his elder brother, his uncle, his neighbour; but if nobody is there, then let him ask his wife and do the opposite.

Finally, a few words about WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE ECONOMIC LIFE of the Russian East. As might be expected, it was everywhere hopeless until recently, although it always was and is the women who perform the greater part of the work both in agriculture and

otherwise. In the mountain *auls* of the Northern Caucasus and Transcaucasia, in the semi-nomad regions of Kazakhstan, Turkmenia, the Kirghiz Steppes, and Buriat Mongolia, in the far north of Asia—wherever we look in the East, life rests entirely upon women's, not men's, work. At seed and harvest time it is still almost exclusively women who do the whole work of the fields, labouring like ants from early morning till far into the night—women of all ages, girls of ten side by side with quite old women. They reap and grind the corn, gather the cotton flowers, milk the cows, tend all the other animals, shear the sheep, clean the wool, and tan the leather. They cook and even make the family's shoes, mind the children, prepare the felt for the nomad tents, weave textiles and carpets, embroider *pallasses* and *tyubetyekas*, and all by the most primitive methods, with the utmost labour, with indescribable effort, often bending down for months or lying contorted on the ground. Nothing is too hard for them.

Perhaps this state of affairs strikes us most crudely in the mountains of the Caucasus. There the women, in addition to all the rest, must climb the steep paths often winding for miles along the side of a precipice and incredibly narrow, with a heavy basket on their backs and driving the laden *ishak*, or donkey, in order to reach their *aul*, suspended at a dizzy height like a swallow's nest; for the tiny *kukuruts* fields, the orchards and vegetable gardens, around the *aul* on bare rock must have at least a little earth brought from the valley below. And the woman is in a great hurry. For her "lord," her husband, is waiting for her at home; he works occasionally in the field for once in a way and takes the surplus produce to market; for the rest he only dances his *Lesginka* and cleans his gun. First and foremost he is a warrior, and domestic matters do not concern him. Is that not what women are for?

Among the nomad peoples of Central Asia, too, the husband sits all day outside his *kibitka*, drinks his *kumyss*,

chats with his neighbours, scolds his wives, pays visits, goes to the bazaar, and hunts; and if he finds life too dull, he rides aimlessly over the wide steppes. If we examine the activities of nomads with some care, we see that they are mainly of an organizing character; a nomad guards his house and cattle, looks for grazing grounds and places to pitch his tent, takes his wares to market, and buys others.

And yet we must admit that, melancholy as was the unchecked economic exploitation of women, yet it is a mistake to see in it *solely* a variety of male oppression. It is really a relic of the PATRIARCHAL DIVISION OF LABOUR, whereby all domestic work fell to the lot of the women, whilst the no less important duty of fighting and organization belonged to the men. It was due to a later development, pointed out by *Engels* in his *Origin of the Family*, that the men became idlers when wars ceased to be perpetual; and the excessive work of the women, although not historically a form of subjection, is hardly the less shocking.

But the most crying injustice of the system lies in the fact that the whole produce of the women's labour belonged to the man, that women were not regarded as equals. Thus a woman's share of the heritage among the Mohammedans was minute in comparison with the man's legitimate portion; and the evidence of two women in a court of law was only equal to that of one man. In the rural community based on the tribal order women could not hold membership at all in some districts, especially in Turkmenia. Similarly all the other commandments of the *Shariat* and the *Adat* restricted the rights of women and kept them in a state of absolute dependence, the slaves and obedient performers of the will of their masters, who disposed, not only of the produce of their hard work, but even of life and death. Moreover, the hygienic conditions of labour in the East were as bad as possible, and resulted in an enormous mortality among women and children, and in premature

old age. And so the hopeless economic position of women in the Russian East contributed not a little to make their lives a perpetual hell.

Indeed no words can express the unimaginable lot of these most wretched beings, these slaves among slaves. Many, many volumes might be filled with reports of the female victims of the male despotism of the East, women buried alive, cast down deep gorges, poisoned, stabbed, or burnt by their own hand with paraffin; and yet there would be no end. If stones could speak, then in Uzbekistan alone every inner court of the women's chambers, the *ichkaris*, every wall surrounding the courts, would tell a thousand stories so horrible that our hair would stand on end. We can, therefore, feel with a Mohammedan woman when she cries in a moment of utter despair: "Accursed be the day when I was born a woman!" Indeed it is hardly surprising to learn that in 1924, when these poor women were beginning to awake and break their chains, there were twenty-five cases in Azerbaijan alone of women who murdered their husbands. . . .

Even then things were moving, moving towards a development brought about by the greater historical upheaval of our day, the Russian October Revolution, and turning the "patriarchal" conditions that I have briefly described along new paths hitherto undreamed of.

THE DAWN OF THE NEW ERA

OCTOBER AND THE QUESTION OF NATIONALITIES

LENIN'S DESIGNATION OF TSARIST RUSSIA, WITH ITS countless oppressed nationalities, as "the great prison of the peoples" was not inapt. Tsarist policy towards the conquered colonial peoples, or those who had been incorporated in the empire without actual conquest, the "alien races," was a policy of exploiting such natural riches as were most easy of access, a policy of the most wide-scale robbery of the land and the soil, of the most ruthless "clearing of the country of the native savages," in short, a policy of annihilation. In order to be able to colonize the land with reliable Russian elements, the Tsarist Government expropriated over a hundred million acres of the best land of the Kirghiz Kazakhs alone and drove them into the deserts of what is now Central Kazakhstan.

These, and similar governmental methods, were repeated against the Cherkesses, Bashkirs, Buriat Mongols, Kalmucks, and other peoples. Practically nothing was done to develop the annexed territories economically and culturally. The cotton of Turkistan was all manufactured in the mills of Central Russia; the hunting tribes of Northern Asia, who supplied the whole Russian fur trade, still used bows and arrows, and in many districts people still used the most ancient and primitive agricultural implements. Little wonder, then, that a Russian writer, *Pisemskiy*, who had the opportunity in 1885 to become well acquainted with the lives of the Kalmucks on the Caspian Steppes, observes in his

diary that, compared with a Kalmuck, the Russian peasant lived like a prince. The same might have been said without hesitation of the other colonial peoples of the Russian Empire.

As regards the cultural policy of the Tsarist Empire, it was confined to this inhuman exclusion of the alien peoples from anything like culture and education, a mockery of all historical progress. There was not a single university for them, no secondary schools in their native language, no national cultural institutes, but all the more illiterates (in many districts as many as 100 per cent), sombre superstition, horrifying lack of hygiene, serious illnesses and pestilences. The hatred between the several nationalities was systematically fomented. Thus the instructions to the President of the Orenburg Commission contains the following brazen command: "If the Bashkirs or Kirghiz show an inclination to rebel, they are to be played off against one another, and the Russian army spared." In consequence of this Tsarist colonial policy, many peoples were destroyed and many were in process of dying out when the Revolution broke out.

With the fall of Tsarism in February, 1917, a new chapter begins in the history of Russia's national minorities. The economically, politically, and socially retrograde peoples, the "step-children and wards of the Great Russian State," were roused by the spreading vibrations of the great earthquake that had overturned the Tsar's throne. But *Kerenski's* February revolution failed to make use of their new mood. The protagonists of the middle-class, democratic revolution had no programme for the alien nationalities, no key to this most burning problem of the tottering empire, in which only about 52 per cent of the population was GREAT RUSSIAN, and so belonged to the dominating race. It is true that they were the heirs of Tsarism, but in spite of empty phrases about self-determination and cultural autonomy, they were not disinclined to continue the

policy of their predecessors with, perhaps, less despotic methods. But meanwhile the days of the middle-class revolution were numbered, even in Central Russia. Within a few months the discontent of the war-weary masses, clamouring for a radical revolution, grew under Bolshevik leadership to an irresistible force, and found natural allies in the intellectual leaders of the oppressed nationalities, from whom the February Revolution withheld the longed-for liberation, and had, moreover, no guarantee of a better future to offer. And so the non-Russian peoples underwent a constant process of radicalization in the months from February to October. "The most retrograde of the retrograde were forced to seek allies in the revolutionary class," writes a historian of the new Russia. "And so the left wing elements in their youthful intelligentsia paved the way to Bolshevism for the Votiaks, Chuvashes, and Syryenians and the peoples of Daghestan and Turkistan."

Unlike the February Revolutionaries, the Bolsheviks whom the rising revolutionary wave in October bore aloft and made the arbiters of Russia's destiny, had a ready-made plan for the solution of the nationality problem. Like all the principles which guided the proceedings of the Party before and after its accession to power, the validity of this formula is associated with *Lenin's* name. In his book, *Who are the People's Friends?* Lenin had traced the essential lines as early as 1894, along which the solution of the minority problem in the territories of the former Tsarist Empire was later to be achieved. Conscious of the importance of the problem, the October Revolution lost no time in realizing its leader's programme, for only by its solution could the goodwill and aid of the non-Russian peoples be assured to the country that had gone red overnight. It was a programme calculated to throw everything into the shade that had hitherto been achieved in this matter, by its boldness and its consistency.

For Lenin is ruthlessly radical in his nationality

programme, as in everything else. Avoiding all half-measures from the first, he proclaims the necessity of self-determination, political and economic, of all peoples, including the right to secede and form independent states; mere cultural equality he opposes. His prime object is the interest of the Soviet power to secure the solidarity and help of the masses formerly scorned as "alien" in its struggle to assert itself. "In order to overcome the suspicion of the working masses in the oppressed countries against the proletariat of the country that formerly oppressed them," says Lenin, "it is essential to abolish all privileges of all national groups, to make the nations absolutely equal in rights, and to recognize the right of the colonies, as nations enjoying equal rights, to form separate states."

It is hard to see how it would have been possible to go further, without directly encouraging the "alien races" to separate from Russia. Needless to say, that was not the aim of the victorious party. And so we can understand how it is that Western Europe refused to see anything but a Bolshevik "war stratagem" in the whole Communist programme for the nationalities. Be that as it may, it is a fact that the right to political independence was quite clearly formulated. The Declaration of the Russian Workers' and Peasants' Government, signed by Lenin and Stalin, and issued on November 2nd, 1917, two days after the victory of the October Revolution, includes, besides the recognition of the equal rights of all the peoples in Russia, the abolition of all national privileges, and the right to "free development," likewise the recognition of the right to free self-determination. But even then Lenin added that the kernel of the Bolshevik nationality programme did not lie in actual separation and the constitution of new states, but in the "voluntary union of the nations." The contradiction was resolved by reference to the peculiar character of the new Russian state, where the working class exercised authority—a circumstance which rendered

it the duty of every other country likewise ruled by the workers to choose the road of union instead of that of separation.

Consequently the Union of Soviet Republics was, as the constitution of June 19th, 1918, stated "formed on the basis of the free union of free nations as a Federation of national Republics," and subsequently enlarged to a union of several member states. At present they number eleven; in 1922 four member states were constituted, Soviet Russia, Ukraine, White Russia, and Transcaucasia; two years later the two Central Asian Republics of Turkmenia and Uzbekistan were added, in 1930 Tajikistan, and by the constitution of 1936 the Kirghiz area and Kazakhstan, whilst the Transcaucasian Union was divided into three independent member states (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan). Within the separate member states there were further constituted fifteen autonomous republics and nineteen autonomous regions which, like the member states, were founded on the principle of national self-determination. Within this federal structure the nationality programme of Lenin and the Communist party was incorporated in the constitution of the Soviet Union and, in a general way, realized in practice. Even the principle of free union was retained, of which Lenin had written that "without the right of separation it was an empty phrase."

Thus the Soviet Union is a union of nationalities; its supreme legislative organ, the Central Executive Committee (*Vtsik*), consists of a COUNCIL OF THE UNION and a COUNCIL OF NATIONALITIES. The latter consists of representatives of the eleven member states, the autonomous Republics, and the autonomous Regions. It is of particular interest in connection with our subject that the ten representatives of each member state, as well as the five representatives of each autonomous Republic, must include women. The autonomous Regions only send two representatives each to the

Council of Nationalities. Here too, then, the fact that the political structure of the Union is built upon a federal and national basis finds expression.

The difficulties confronting such a development were many and various, and the unhappy experiences of the nationalities, who remembered their former Russian oppressors and, as I have said, continued to foster suspicion, were only one of the most important. What seemed an insuperable difficulty, a heritage of history and of the Tsarist nationality policy, was the backwardness of the seventy million non-Russians living in the territory of the present Union. It was easy, therefore, to concede on paper "separate state organization on the basis of national culture," as officially formulated, but all the harder to fulfil the promise in practice. For, especially in the East, the countries in question had not even reached the Russian stage of capitalist development; gentile organization frequently prevailed, and there were, indeed, oppressors and oppressed, but "neither middle class nor proletariat."

How was it possible to introduce the "proletarian class warfare" into these countries? Even now it appears strange to European readers when, let us say, a Tungus newspaper uses the well-known expression "capitalist exploitation," whereas many Western European Socialist theorists have always declared Russia to be unripe for the socialist revolution, although it is in some measure European and capitalist. And what had to be done, at least in theory, was to raise a number of peoples in Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Northern Asia, who had not even reached the capitalist stage, to the "higher socialist conditions of production and standard of life." And, as regards national culture, which, according to the programme, was to serve as a basis and guide for each separate state organization, it existed at best for a minute section of educated men, whilst the mass of the "alien races" lived their lives in the profoundest ignorance.

The protagonists of the new development in Soviet Russia have never been blind to the fact that the prime necessity is to allow the non-Russian peoples in the Union to catch up Russia proper in economic and political progress. Everything that has been done since the October Revolution, and is still being done, belongs to this transitional programme, the accomplishment of which is to create the prerequisite conditions for the real nationality programme. The right of self-determination of the peoples of the Soviet East finds unambiguous expression in the political structure of the Soviet Union, but it has been left to further progress to fill in the outlines, which progress, however, is actively encouraged by the whole Soviet policy. And so we may not unreasonably ask whether realities will not disappoint expectation, and whether the economic and cultural progress of the backward peoples, to which every effort is directed, will not produce results other than those expected at present: whether, when once these peoples have reached a certain stage of economic and cultural progress, they will not try to make use of their chartered right of self-determination in an unwelcome manner.

It does not appear that these anxieties are felt in the Soviet Union itself. Only occasional doubts are expressed. Thus the Buriat Mongols addressed the following question to Stalin, which we should rather expect from the lips of a professor of philosophy than from the representatives of a plain and straightforward nomad people: "Since it is the admitted aim of Communist policy to create a uniform human civilization, how must we picture the transition of national civilization, as evolved in the several national republics in the Union, to this general human civilization, and how will the particular characteristics of the various national civilizations be approximated to it?"

For the rest, people in the Soviet state to-day see in the manner of solving this cultural problem a striking example of historical dialectic, since by strengthening

the national character of the peoples and fostering their hitherto neglected culture, they are meant to be brought nearer to one another, and actually are so brought, not divided.

Be that as it may, the encouragement of cultural, and of course no less economic, progress is the alpha and omega of the Bolshevik programme, or rather, of the transitional programme, of the present Government in all the non-Russian territories of the Union, and first and foremost in the Soviet East. Two aspects of the constructive programme of the Soviet Government—economic and cultural—emerge unambiguously in the principles of the dominant party, formulated in 1922. According to these it is the task of the party's nationality policy to "help the working masses of the non-Russian peoples to catch up the more advanced Central Russia." This was to be achieved on the one hand "by the systematic establishment of industries in the frontier districts, especially by hastening the speed of development of industry and culture in the backward national areas," but, on the other hand, "by consolidating the native systems of justice, administration, industrial management, and government under persons with a knowledge of native conditions and of the psychology of the inhabitants; further by encouraging the Press, education, the theatre, and club organization, as well as other cultural institutions; and finally by creating a widespread network of courses and schools, both general and technical or professional, in the native tongue."

These, briefly stated, are the guiding principles of the nationalities policy; and it will be seen that they particularly stress the fostering of native culture and speech. It might have been expected that so radical a programme, which combined all tactical advantages, would have won the oppressed peoples at once for the new rulers. But that could only have been if the most important point in the programme itself, the raising of

the cultural standard in the areas inhabited by national minorities, had already been realized. The reverse, however, was the case. At first the peoples to whom the Bolsheviks promised and brought liberation from age-long servitude hardly took any notice of the programme. It is true that there was a dim urge towards freedom in the Eastern masses, but the call from the West sounded too strange and unaccustomed to them.

An anecdote illustrates this point. At the first Conference of Eastern Peoples Lenin read a report lasting for several hours. In the midst of his speech he suddenly turned to one of the members of the Conference, the representative of the Kalmucks: "What do the Kalmucks say about Bolshevism?" The man addressed, the author Amur Ssanan, whom I have already mentioned several times, leapt to his feet and was ready with a prompt answer: "The Kalmucks say: We have had the plague, and that passed over; we have had the cholera, and that passed over; now we have Bolshevism, but that will not pass over." Ssanan writes that the answer called forth general mirth.

As regards the few intellectuals among the minorities, some of them had not taken the social revolution so very seriously, some were allied by ties of blood and class interest with the feudal possessing classes and the native clergy, and, finally, they did not evince any very great readiness to miss the historic opportunity of real political independence; for in each country there were feeble rudiments of a national mass movement to which the advocates of a final secession from revolutionary Russia could attach themselves.

Taking it all in all, the effects of the October Revolution in the countries of the "alien races" did not work out as had been expected. Everywhere arose an armed barrier to the forward march of Bolshevism. In October itself there arose a strange and shortlived political structure known as the "South-Eastern Union of the Cossack Armies of the Mountaineers of the Caucasus

and the Free Peoples of the Steppes." Everywhere a motley jumble of national governments assumed power and established independent democratic states under middle-class leadership, intended partly as the realization of long-standing national aspirations, partly as a check to the Red menace.

Most of these governments survived longer than they would otherwise have done because the Russian counter-revolution and foreign intervention came to their aid. Thus the "Democratic Republic of Daghestan" was occupied by the Turks in October, 1918, after some months of rule by the White Guards; then it was under British control for two months, and finally served as a basis of Denikin's operations, who fought with Kornilov and General Alexeyev's army of volunteers against the Russians and extended his authority for a time throughout the whole of southern Russia. Transcaucasia, too, separated from Russia and was the scene of a bloody struggle between the three newly established independent republics of Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. In the proletarian city of Baku, where a Soviet Government was set up soon after the October Revolution, the civil war, in which English troops sometimes took part, lasted two whole years, until the "Mussavet" Government was overthrown and Bolshevism triumphed. Armenia was sovietized in 1920, Georgia not till a year later.

During all these years rivers of blood were shed in Transcaucasia. By way of example, I will only cite the little mountain territory of Karabagh, now an autonomous part of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Of its 212 villages, fifty-nine were razed to the ground, and a quarter of the population lost their lives in the struggle carried on by the democratic Governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan for the tiny territory.

No less bloody was the struggle in Central Asia. The revolutionary fever spread most rapidly to Bukhara, the centre of Islam in Turkistan and the capital of the

Emir, who still ruled with oriental despotism. In 1920 the Emirate was overthrown, but a further four years passed before Uzbekistan joined the Soviet Union as a Soviet Republic and a member state. In the same year Turkistan adhered to the Union. But meanwhile the fiercest struggles raged in Central Asia, led by the *basmaches*, successors of the nomad robbers formerly well-known in those parts, and supported by the *beys*, the large landowners, and the Mohammedan clergy. *Kishlaks* destroyed, settlements burnt and laid waste, and only now slowly reviving, still mark the trail of the *basmaches*. They were fanatical Mohammedans, and assumed the title "Hosts of the Faith"; they violated women and murdered them, tore their tongues out, and turned the fruitful valleys of Ferghana into cemeteries, and fields that had born golden harvests into sandy deserts. For years afterwards the fields were populated by wild beasts and boars instead of the horses, cattle, and camels of the *dekhkans*, the peasants of Central Asia.

From Persia, too, the *basmaches* received aid and support, and it was not till 1922 that the victorious advance of the Red troops succeeded in subduing them. But it was only in 1925 that the Soviet régime began to consolidate itself and spread in Central Asia, only with the realization of the land reform, of which I shall have more to say, since it is connected with the law of marriage.

THE WOMEN OF THE EAST IN THE CIVIL WAR

Throughout these terrible years of civil war we find no facts that would justify us in speaking of an awakening of women in the Russian East. The mass of the women, mainly Mohammedan, belonging not only to an oppressed nation and an enslaved class, but also to a sex subjugated by their menfolk, met these events of world-wide significance with a dull lack of understanding, though often they broke in upon their own walled-in

existence and robbed them of husbands, sons, and fathers. These women had still long to wait before tidings penetrated to them of a victoriously advancing revolution which had inscribed the liberation of women upon its banners, and especially a breaking of the bonds that enslaved the women of the East.

Consequently it was only in isolated cases that women took any part in the civil war, the cruel struggle between Whites and Reds, the issue of which was destined to transform fundamentally the whole face of the Near East, and, in particular, the position of women right away to the Far North and East. I will cite a few of these cases.

In the Chapayev Division there was a sister who took part in the struggle as a combatant, Khamitova by name. She was a Bashkir, the daughter of a labourer in Ufa, and she returned from the front with consumption and died six years later, after playing an active part in the work of construction in the land of the Bashkirs.

Amur Ssanan, whom I have already mentioned and of whose book, *The Son of Mudryoshka*, it has been said "that it was written with blood of one who bore all the sufferings of his people, the Kalmucks, on his back," tells of another Kalmuck woman who took part in the civil war:

In the Kalmuck cavalry regiments there were genuine heroes in 1919, and one of the best was Colonel Shapshukov, Commander of the Second Squadron, who was supported by his wife, Narma, in every attack and assault. Side by side they galloped. She must never remain behind, or he cried imperiously: "Don't stop, or I will kill you myself!" And Narma Shapshukov never held back, did not take off her clothes for months at a time, and is still one of the most honoured champions of the Women's Movement in the Soviet East.

The following account of the aged Kalmuck woman Ashur comes from the same district and the same period.

It was in 1918, when the White generals, in compact with the clergy, held the Kalmucks in submission, in consequence of

their general ignorance and unenlightened condition. They were taught that the *burkhans* (idols, representing the Kalmuck Buddha) would punish anyone with death and destruction that should dare to obey the ruthless Reds, who believed in no god, neither Kalmuck, nor Russian, nor any other. But it was not long before the Red Guards, workmen from Moscow and Petrograd, arrived at the *ulus* (Kalmuck village), where they were received in hostile silence. Some of the men were fighting with the Whites. The commander of the Red troops asked to be shown the *burkhans*. He was taken to a number of gigantic statues of Buddha, gilt over with brass and seated motionless, whilst the Whites, who had not had time to escape from the village, were concealed in the temple behind, armed to the teeth. Shots were fired immediately and echoed on all sides, and a fierce struggle ensued. The rifles of the Reds fired with sure aim straight at the motionless bodies of the brass *burkhans*, behind which lay the Whites. The horrified Kalmucks waited: now the heavens must open and punish the sacrilege severely, or the earth would swallow up the criminals. But heaven and earth were silent. . . .

Ashur, no longer young, had stood close by all the time and seen everything. After the departure of the Red Guards she kept silence for three days. She kept silence and reflected. And when, on the fourth day, the clergy summoned the people in order to consecrate "the *burkhans* that the godless men had defiled," Ashur took her stand before one of the *burkhans* and said: "My great-grandfather and my grandfather worshipped you. And whilst my mother still suckled me, she taught me that the *burkhan* was great and holy. And we lived on in darkness and ignorance, like the wild beasts. But now . . ."

At these words the assembled Kalmucks were seized with horror. But Ashur continued: "Now I spit thrice in your face, *burkhan*! You are a piece of iron and brass, that is what you always were and always will be. But if you are a god, punish me!"

And three times Ashur spit in its face and stood stock still, waiting for what would happen. But nothing happened. The *burkhan*, a piece of gilt metal, did not stir. But Ashur was nearly beaten to death. She would doubtless have been killed outright, if she had not succeeded, in spite of her injuries, in dragging herself out into the steppes. There she was picked up by a Red unit.

With them she wandered over the steppes, and reached Rostov on the Don. When she returned in 1924 to her *ulus*, the first thing she did was to hunt out the *burkhans* and hand them over to a museum, where they are now exhibited as dumb witnesses of the past. And Ashur herself? "I am now conducting a school in the *ulus* with fifty scholars. They are good scholars. Then I have sent five young people to Moscow and Rostov, where they are studying and will return to our vast steppes to help build up the new life. . . ."

A. Nukhrat, in her deepfelt *Legend of the Steppes*, tells of another woman warrior of the civil war, the Kazakh Alma:

We had neither sleep nor food. We passed the night in staff quarters on the ground or the tables, sitting or lying, or even standing against the wall. We were ready, both men and women, to go into battle at any moment, and we did too. On cold, damp autumn evenings, holding our breath, we clambered up steep mountain precipices in the search for hidden White Guards. The next moment we fell upon the enemy with suppressed fury, on mountains and in gorges. The women did everything that the men did. They did not spare themselves in the heat of battle, and no quarter was given. At last we had cleared our country of the enemy.

In those days the most dangerous and important tasks were entrusted to women. But not one of us ever shrank from any undertaking, none was concerned for her own life. We were possessed by the spirit of battle, and we knew for what we were fighting and dying. Once one of our women was disguised as a pious beggar and sent to spy out the whereabouts of a leader of the bandits. Our unhappy friend fell into the hands of the gang she was seeking and was killed, after horrible torments. We found her mutilated body the next day. And what ensued? That very evening another woman went out to perform the same duty, without a tremor. And she did perform it. . . .

Those who fought in the civil war in the mountains of Daghestan have still much to tell of the brave mountaineer women who brought them ammunition, showed them secret paths by which they could make a detour and avoid the enemy, and warned them of ambushes.

Especially there are a number of stories of the Avar-Darghi woman, *Umu Kussum Amir Khanova*, one of the few women from the mountains of Daghestan who had learnt something before the October Revolution and began at the age of eighteen, in 1918, to carry on "underground" work and agitate, mainly among native women; she was the only woman agitator. When the civil war broke out she was condemned to be shot several times, but she always escaped by a miracle. Later, as I was told, she was the only woman of Daghestan to remain for years at the front, wearing men's clothes and a kerchief over her head; she was always ready when her male comrades hesitated, she bore hunger, cold, and all the other privations of the war with steady endurance, and stormed one *aul* after another on a magnificent white horse, at the head of her troop. The soldiers honoured and protected their woman leader as a precious jewel, and she herself did not shrink from close combat with the enemy commander.

Of course all these, and other, stories stirred my keen interest in this "first swallow." But when, during my last visit to Baku, in 1936, I made the personal acquaintance of Umu Kussum, I was shocked to see before me, not the proud, modern Caucasian Amazon, sensible of her strength, whom I had hoped to find, but a little slip of a woman, broken in body and soul by consumption, paying the price of her hard and bitter childhood, her reckless courage, and all the trials of strength and terrors of her youth, by the premature renunciation of a life lived to the full. . . .

Outwardly unimpressive as she was, though once of iron force, all her inward strength now concentrated in her burning, dark eyes, she was yet able to take her degree in the Faculty of Social History at Baku after the sovietization of Daghestan in 1921, though she was confined to her bed with high fever. She is, indeed, still working, as best she can, at a dictionary of her native Avar language, at translations from Turkish,

and at a history of the Party in her native country, but she feels all this as a poor substitute for what she used to accomplish, and could still accomplish, if she were in good health. And again and again, as I tried to comfort her during our talk, the words broke from her: "Of what use is all that, if I cannot live the fiery life I used to do? I had cherished so many wishes, so many dreamt, such a fire burns within me for all our women, fire that I kept carefully concealed in Tsarist days, so much energy is needed everywhere nowadays, and I can as best be a looker-on: am I not committing a crime by so doing . . .?"

Deshakhan Abidova, now the President of the City Soviet of Tashkent, of whom more later, told me of another, immeasurably sadder case, for it was altogether inhuman—that of a woman who fought in the civil war in Uzbekistan. This was *Tsainet Khesmitova*, once famous throughout the whole Union, who, herself almost a child, left her aged husband when her parents were killed by the *basmaches*, fled to the Reds, and rendered them important service as a spy. But her enraged husband swore vengeance; he found two murderers who spied out the victim, and, when they actually seized the poor woman, beat her black and blue, cut out her tongue, and buried her still living body in the ground up to her head.

She was found more dead than alive by the Red troops who had been sent out specially to seek her, and was brought in an aeroplane to Bukhara and afterwards in a hospital train to Moscow, where the skill of the doctors succeeded in saving her life. Since then, appallingly crippled and mutilated, she has remained in a special Moscow institution for Bolsheviks incapable of work, surrounded by the love and care of her fellow-countrymen. "When I am in Moscow and visit her," Abidova concluded her story, "I am ill for at least three days and of no use for anything. . . ."

WOMEN LIBERATED BY THE LAW

From the ocean of blood of the civil war a new power arose, the dominion of a youthful class and, indeed, of a youthful people, one that had never yet made world history, and was now confronted with the gigantic task of setting a new stamp on the face of one sixth of the earth's surface. If we approach the question of the true achievements of the Soviet power, a question so often distorted by party hatred, we cannot escape from two conclusions: the October Revolution proclaimed to the masses of the Tsarist Empire an equality of rights embracing not only hitherto oppressed classes, but also the national minorities and the female half of the population. But, secondly, the Soviets have set about realizing the first point in their programme, a process of economic and cultural construction which cannot, however, be regarded as anywhere near complete.

As regards the first, that of equality of rights, it could, as we have seen, be simply decreed, and the rest be left to future developments. Still, something was attained, though assuredly not everything, by the declaration on paper of the equal rights of all the peoples within the Union and the absolute equality of men and women, before actual steps were taken to realize it in practice. It was certain from the first that the actual liberation, whether of the peoples or of women, could only be the work of the liberated peoples and the emancipated women themselves. Likewise, that success in the actual liberation depended upon the manner and speed with which the second point of the programme, the raising of the economic and cultural standard, was successfully realized. And whilst it was recognized that progress was necessary in the Soviet territory of Russia proper, the necessity was, of course, felt to be still more urgent in the territories of the Soviet East, so much more backward both culturally and economically.

The law is the written and petrified precipitate of the

Government's will, and can do no more than clear away the barriers which hinder the developments desired. That applies equally to the solution of the nationality problem contained in Soviet legislation and in the constitution, and to the problem of women's emancipation in the Soviet East.

Theoretically the problem of the Eastern peoples in the Soviet Union is solved. It will be really settled only when the peoples, who until recently carried on a twilight existence in forms unworthy of their humanity, work consciously and in great numbers at the task of moulding their personal and communal life. The same may be said of the question of the position of women in the Soviet East. Here, too, life itself must help to realize the will of the rulers, as laid down in the letter of the law. Before, therefore, we put the question, how far that has actually been attained, now and, in general, since the October Revolution, I will begin with a brief discussion of the SOVIET LAWS dealing with the position of women in the East. For in all of them it is less a question of the prohibition and punishment of existing abuses than of methods of guiding future developments in a definite direction. And the actual progress achieved may fairly be measured by the test of how far people in the Soviet East really do conform to these laws; that is to say, how far the conditions under which the peoples live—the human relations, which are designated by the much-embracing Russian word *byt*, and the whole of their human surroundings—have already become adapted to the existing laws in the course of the transition now in progress.

My last chapter told what the former *byt* was like in the Caucasus, in Central Asia, and Northern Asia, though that does not concern us so much here. Let me sum up briefly what I there described: the predominantly Mohammedan peoples of the Russian East lived in a patriarchal and feudal social system until the October Revolution, and some still do; there were everywhere

relics of earlier days, still more patriarchal. In some districts the old gentile order still survived, for capitalist development, which had ousted it elsewhere, had hardly passed beyond its initial stage in the Russian East. Hence the possibility of the unexampled oppression by the large landowners, the *beys*, whilst the people's ignorance secured to the Mohammedan divines a decisive influence that had not diminished since the Middle Ages. The vendetta, closely related to the gentile order, was generally regarded as the supreme law. The manner in which Islam determined and influenced the position of women, less through the *Koran* than through the civil law (the *Shariat*) and the customs of the East (the *Adats*), found universal acceptance. Islamic contempt for women went hand in hand with the Islamic subjection of women. And though polygamy was not general, for economic reasons—the poverty of the people—yet women were invariably sold, compulsorily at the tenderest age, married, and sometimes captured. One of the first and most important actions of the Soviet Government, after the consolidation of its power in the territories of the nationalities, was to prohibit and render penal these so-called BYT CRIMES.

In December, 1920, one year after the sovietization of Kazakhstan, a series of decrees were issued by the Central Executive, aiming at the liberation of women from the excesses of the former *byt*. First there came a decree, which was, indeed, rather propagandist in character, declaring the ABOLITION OF KALYM. It proclaimed:

Kalym dishonours and humiliates Kazakh women and makes slaves of them. It contributes to consolidate the power of the rich by making the question of marriage a purely material one.

Like decrees were issued in other newly established Soviet states. In October, 1924, the Central Executive entered upon the struggle against the relics of the old order in a general way by their "Supplementary Déece

to the Criminal Code of the R.S.F.S.R. for the autonomous Republics and Regions." But, since this decree did not apply to all the member states, the Central Executive took matters into its own hands and initiated a uniform legislative attack upon the "crimes representing a relic of the tribal order" in the Council of Nationalities. In all the national states the bill was received with great interest, and was discussed eagerly in meetings and by the officials. This general interest on the part of the working population was regarded as a sign that the masses looked upon the *byt* crimes as the essential barriers to reconstruction. One after another the separate states expressed their views and proposed amendments. The women of the East, too, and their organizations, were roused more than ever before by the proposed law, which is easy to understand, for all questions raised were such as to affect profoundly their whole future way of life. Finally, in April, 1928, after thorough consultation with the leaders of the national states and the Central Committee, it was found possible to pass it into law.

In the final form the PARAGRAPH FORBIDDING MARRIAGE BY PURCHASE reads as follows:

The payment of a purchase price for a bride (*kalym*) by the bridegroom to the parents or relatives or kindred of the bride, in the form of ready money or cattle or other goods, or of personal service, is punishable by imprisonment or hard labour for a period not exceeding one year. The acceptance of *kalym* incurs the same penalties, in addition to a fine equivalent to the purchase price.

Paragraph 197, FORBIDDING COMPULSORY MARRIAGE reads as follows:

If a woman is forced against her will to marry or to continue cohabitation with a man, or is captured with a view to marriage, such compulsion is punishable with imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years.

A footnote imposes special penalties for the violation of the captured woman. The refusal to grant a divorce

and the delivery of a widow to her dead husband's brother (the levirate) is also made a penal offence.

The next paragraph treats of the PROHIBITION OF CHILD MARRIAGE and declares:

Marriage with a person who has not reached puberty is punishable with imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years.

So, too POLYGAMY is rendered a penal offence, and is punishable with hard labour for the period of a year or a fine not exceeding a thousand roubles.

At the meeting at which the law was approved, the Executive Committee added decrees against other *byt* crimes, in particular against VENDETTA, BARANTA (the seizure of another person's cattle as commutation for the blood vengeance incurred), the illegal assumption of judicial powers, especially by the Mohammedan *Shariat* courts, and against all kinds of compulsory taxation for religious purposes, and so on. Besides those immediately concerned, every Soviet citizen is entitled to give information of a *byt* crime that has come to his knowledge. This considerably facilitates the efforts of the courts to make an end of the abuses of the old order, for it often happened, and still happens, that, for instance, a girl captured by violence is prevented by fear from bringing the accusation of kidnapping.

According to the law the higher officials of the district and province have the right to require a re-examination of any judgement passed by the People's Court. For particularly in the case of *byt* crimes it often happened in the early days that the relatives hushed up an offence. But at the same session it was pointed out that the penalties provided in the law must be supported by a great propaganda campaign in the national states in the native tongue. This propaganda must be particularly intensive among the poorer classes.

Individual member states added supplementary provisions to the general law, based upon local conditions. Thus in Turkmenia it was necessary to make MARRIAGE

BY BARTER a penal offence, as well as marriage by purchase. Certain republics even used the formulation of supplementary paragraphs to the code for purposes of propaganda, and created a new legal language, not uncommon in the Soviet Union, markedly different from the dry legal style in use in other states. Thus a special law of the Kirghiz against polygamy reads as follows:

Only such persons may marry as are living in no other registered marriage nor in a relation similar to registered marriage. Polygamy is absolutely forbidden, as an evil custom, highly injurious to the moral dignity of Kirghiz women, and leading to their enslavement and the exploitation of their persons.

Thus the law resolutely attacked all the antiquated forms of social life, for without their abolition no real *liberation of Eastern women could be conceived*. The manner in which the courts applied the penal paragraphs, especially during the early transition period, bore witness to their good will to make an end of the relics of the past and to clear the way for new developments.

BYT CRIMES IN THE COURTS

It was, of course, not possible to abolish *byt* crimes at the first attack, in spite of vigorous threats of punishment and an increasingly intense propaganda campaign. Frequently the conditions which made them possible, and in certain cases even inevitable, persisted, and, moreover, the customs now more or less plainly branded as *byt* crimes were too deeply rooted in the people's lives. At first, especially, there was not the slightest sense of guilt, and the prisoners who experienced the full severity of the law could not understand for what misdeed they were being punished. Nevertheless, some undoubted success has been achieved in abolishing out-of-date marriage forms. The fact that the number of prosecutions for *byt* crimes is shown by the statistics

to be increasing (in 1928 there were 694 prosecutions in Uzbekistan, resulting in 529 sentences) must by no means be regarded as proof of an increase of *byt* crimes, but rather of the reverse, for the cases that do occur, doubtless less frequently, are no longer silently tolerated by the people; without exception they are brought to the knowledge of the authorities.

The struggle against *kalym* (marriage by purchase) is the hardest, and this was the cause of the largest number of sentences, whilst marriage by capture occurred hardly anywhere except in the Northern Caucasus in 1925, and in that year polygamy proved to be widespread only among the Bashkirs. (In their country there were eighty-nine prosecutions for polygamy and bigamy, only eighteen in Kazakhstan, and twelve in the Kabard-Balkar Republic). Women had served as a mere commodity too long in the whole of the Russian East, and the belief was too deep-rooted that a marriage without *kalym* must be meaningless and invalid.

It is significant that even registered Communists among the natives were unable to assimilate the new point of view all at once. It is comic to find a thoroughly serious and well-meant circular in which a high Soviet office instructed the subordinate registrars henceforth to marry without exception all couples who applied to them by means of registration "irrespective of whether *kalym* has been paid before the registration of the marriage or is to be paid later." Funny as it sounds, this and other like cases cannot surprise us when we learn that in the most recent times even high Soviet officials and civil servants in the East frequently obtained their wives by purchase. In these circumstances the condemnation of marriage by purchase aimed at by the law was not, of course, to be expected.

In Daghestan the whole struggle against *kalym* was simply misunderstood. Since the good Communists of the mountain Republic never dreamed that there could be any objection to the sacred institution of wife

purchase, practised since the days of Mohammed, they interpreted the law to mean that the Soviet Government wanted to promote social justice and help the poorer classes to obtain wives at prices within their means, by doing away with profiteering. The following price list is the outcome of this historically remarkable interpretation of the law:

1. One girl, quite young, pretty, of
 well-to-do family 300 roubles
2. Girl of poor family, or orphan . 150 ,,
3. Young widow or divorced woman. 100 ,,
4. Middle-aged widow or divorced
 woman 50 ,,

In a similar price list among the Adygei (Cherkesses) the price of an ugly, pock-marked widow, no longer young, is fixed as a hornless cow. This, too, explains a resolution of the Executive Committee of Uzbekistan in 1924:

All Communists and *Komssomoletses* have to begin the abolition of *kalym* with their own wives and acquaintances.

In fact *kalym* is still fairly widespread. Here is a very instructive petition of a poor Kazakh to the courts:

In the night of September 29th, 1927, my father-in-law, Mindybayev, stole my wife, Ailu, and sold her to the Kazakh, Nurgaliyev Smagul in No. 10 *aul* for his second wife. He did this, according to his own statement, because the above-named had been paying him *kalym* for two years. On September 30th I went to my father-in-law and told him that my wife had disappeared. He replied that I had probably murdered her. But on the next day I learned that he himself had stolen the woman and sold her to Nurgaliyev Smagul.

But I bought the woman of him in 1923 for a cow and a calf. The following year he took her from me again and said: "If you will pay me again for her, you shall have her back." Then I gave him another calf and got her back again. But a year later he took her from me once more, and in order to get

her back I had to plough and sow a dessiatine (2½ acres) of land for him this time. But now I have no more money to pay with. My wife was not badly off with me; she was properly fed and clothed. I always gave way to her, and now she has gone to another man because her father forced her to.

I will go further and say that the father has two other daughters whom he sold: the first in 1922 to Kalibayev Sultan, from whom he took her away again in 1926 and sold her to Issagaliyev for 70 pud of wheat and 30 roubles in cash. But in 1925 he promised his youngest daughter to a man and received a cow for her, a year-old horse, and 50 roubles in cash. I have four witnesses who can confirm these facts.

All this shows that poor men no longer have wives at all, whilst the *beys* possess two or three. And I am a poor man, whose wife has been stolen and sold to a *kulak*, simply because he has the money to pay for her. It is true that the Soviet Government opposes *kalym*, but here in the *auls* things go on exactly as they used to. Consequently I implore the court most fervently to help me as a poor man: to get back my wife for me since I have no money to buy another.

In another case a man, a Turkman Communist, appealed direct to the Women's Section of his locality with the following petition:

As I have been a widower for some months, I desire to marry again, for every man needs a housewife in his home. But I cannot marry within the *aul*, for I have not the means, and they ask fifty camels for a wife here.' I therefore beg the *Shenotdyel*, the Women's Section, to provide me with a wife, if she be willing. (Signed) Mohammed Kuli Asherov, Member of the Communist Party of Turkmenia, No. 5177.

Nowadays the difficulty of ascertaining whether *kalym* has actually been paid often hinders the struggle against it. For in a general way payments are now made in cash rather than in kind, as was formerly the custom, and it is, of course, much harder to check such payments. And the girl's father may go to the market with his son-in-law presumptive, where they haggle in loud voices and pretend to be bargaining over a cow. But

in reality it is the daughter, not the cow, that is being bartered away.

In some villages even the women, including delegates, opposed the abolition of *kalym*. In Urotia in the Altai district the women demanded the re-introduction of *kalym* in an electoral campaign, arguing that the price paid for the bride was needed for the dowry—which is probably true in many cases. At the same time, it must not be overlooked that it was left to the free choice of the father to spend much or little of the *kalym* for his daughter's dowry. But of course the majority of Eastern women opposed this view and the retention of *kalym*.

One such woman, the Kazakh Jandai Bababekova, appealed to the *Shenotdyel* (Women's Section) and bewailed her sad lot:

I am an inhabitant of the *aul* of Aktyubinsk. According to our custom my kindred promised me to a man when I was five. When I was thirteen he came and fetched me. Shortly afterwards my husband married a second and a third wife. But we three wives did not get on and I went away to my uncle, as my parents had died in the interval.

One day my uncle came and told me that he had sold me to a citizen in the next *aul* for 8,000 Soviet roubles. I resisted vigorously, but it was no use. A month later the purchaser came and took me to his house. He is a *kulak*. He has 150 sheep, cows, and horses. But I could not stay with him and ran away from him after four months.

The man now demands that I should repay him the money that he spent on the wedding. But I have not got it. The only thing for me to do would be to sell myself again to a man and pay my debt with the money. I beg the *Shenotdyel*, in the name of insulted womanhood, to help me to escape from this debt.

Even the courts were not absolutely trustworthy in *kalym* cases because the People's judges had great sympathy and understanding for these particular crimes, especially at the beginning. For instance, there were only eleven prosecutions for marriage by purchase in

the Samarqand district in 1926, and the same number for ill-treatment of wives, another *by* crime of which we may be absolutely certain that there were more than eleven cases in the district.

One *kalym* prosecution for marriage by purchase was remarkable as disclosing an error, not on the part of the delinquent, but of the law. The framers of the law had forgotten to extend its validity to Russia proper, because nobody had thought of the crime occurring there. An Aisor resident in Moscow had bought the thirteen-year-old daughter of an Aisor woman for his son. When, in spite of the legal flaw, the girl's mother was summonsed—for the sake of example the case was tried in the Moscow Aisors' Club—she was greatly astonished, and went on repeating: "I don't know what it is all about. My daughter is very pretty, and worth much more than the two hundred roubles I got for her, and all of which I have spent on her. Besides, she is quite contented with her husband." Nevertheless, the girl was taken away from the man and sent to school, whilst the mother received only a conditional sentence.

We cannot, therefore, regard the legislative and judicial struggle against *kalym*, the most deeply rooted form of marriage in the Russian East, and in the whole Orient, as by any means at an end. But it is being carried on vigorously, and not without success. "In Kazakhstan there has been no case of *kalym* for the last five years," reports a woman Soviet official of twenty-seven, who was herself sold at the age of five for three cows, a horse, a "good" foal, a camel, and six *beshmets* (quilted petticoats) to a bridegroom of four. She was just turned fourteen when the bridegroom came to fetch her, but meantime the Revolution had broken out and the parents no longer consented to hand her over. She, too, resisted, because she wanted to study. But later she married a Communist, soon became deputy public prosecutor, and is now head of a *Shensector* (Women's Department).

The struggle against *kalym* is carried on with all the resources of propaganda, in addition to the prosecutions. There is a recent custom in the countries of the Soviet East of publishing in the Press, the names of men who have paid *kalym* for their wives. The sense that these black lists still appear too frequently is somewhat mitigated when we read directly after them some such poem as the following from the pen of a Turkman poet.

NEVER AGAIN KALYM

O Adolat! O Adolat!
 With glowing lines
 The carpet shines,
 And colours bright.
 Soon her work is finished quite.
 She weaves all day,
 Time slips away.
 With radiant glow
 Blooms Gul Ssalor,
 But fearing woe
 Turkmenia's daughter trembles sore,
 With inward sigh
 Awaits a guest
 Who comes to buy . . .
 With radiant glow
 Blooms Gul Ssalor.
 The bride-price, lo!
 Craves Gul Ssalor.
 Be old and rich
 Or young the guest,
 What matter which?
 Her father spreads the carpet wide,
 Shows it with zest,
 On every side.
 Thy cruel fate
 Is near at hand, O Adolat.
 With glowing lines
 The carpet shines,
 Her father sits—with an old churl
 To sell the girl;

He sees the price
Before his eyes.
With glowing lines
The carpet shines . . .
O, Gul Ssalor,
Thou shalt be yet disgraced sore !
But Adolat cries bravely : No !
Her father's now her deadly foe,
He seeks her life,
Rage-choked, grasps his bloodthirsty knife.
Veil, night, the deed of cruel hate,
O Adolat ! O Adolat !

All other *byt* crimes likewise, that is to say, out-of-date marriage forms, are attacked with vigour, in accordance with the law, both by passing sentence on the criminals and by preventive propaganda. The courts are largely occupied with EARLY MARRIAGES, besides *kalym* cases, and early marriages frequently "combined with marriage by purchase." Here, again, it is a case of an ancient, deeply-rooted popular custom, partly, no doubt, due to the relatively early puberty of Eastern women. Soviet legislation has made some allowance for biological facts and local customs by fixing the age of consent, which is eighteen in the R.S.F.S.R., at sixteen for the Soviet East, which concession, however, does not always suffice to prevent abuses. A few years ago it was a common custom, and it has occurred quite recently, that mothers in the Soviet East go to the registry office instead of their young daughters, and register themselves under the daughters' names.

There was a case not long ago in Bukhara in which a woman of the name of Sultanova sold her eight-year-old daughter. The bridegroom was twenty-eight. But as the marriage could not be registered, they registered the name of an eighteen-year-old sister instead of the eight-year-old bride. When the matter came to light, the child bride had been the man's actual wife for some days. The girl was put in a home for children, and

there began to play with a doll at once, as if nothing had happened.

Polygamy, which, as I have said, never existed in the Russian East in any large measure, except among the Bashkirs, has not yet quite disappeared. The native Communists, even, did not always lead the attack upon it by setting a good example. In one Caucasian *aul* a man who filled an important post in the Party married four wives in succession. It is easy to imagine how his example affected the other men. For years it was cited, with the comment: "If a Communist can take four wives, they won't forbid the rest of us to, for Allah himself commanded it." In Tajikia there was quite a recent case of a man taking a second wife, because the first was barren or ill. Sometimes Eastern men evade the law by saying that their wives are maidservants, which may often be true in a certain sense, when women are not primarily mates, but in the main beasts of burden. Moreover, the prohibition of polygamy was attended with considerable difficulties because cases occurred in which men took the opportunity of turning wives to whom they had taken a dislike out of doors, as being supernumerary. These cases were particularly frequent in Uzbekistan, though they were contrary to the Government's intentions, for existing marriages with several wives were recognized for economic reasons, and the prohibition only applied to new marriages.

Of course the threefold attack on out-of-date forms of marriage—through legislation, the courts, and propaganda—only constituted a part of the struggle against women's lack of rights in the Soviet East, though probably the most important part. There are a number of other forms of oppression and reaction, against which legislation could do nothing, and which the courts were helpless to attack. In such cases the initiative had to be left to propaganda. I must now recount something of its activity and organization in the Soviet East.

THE WOMEN OF THE EAST AWAKE

WHERE AND HOW PROPAGANDA IS CARRIED ON

NOWHERE IN THE WHOLE WORLD DO THE TWO WORDS—agitation and propaganda—ring so full as in the country where they have been abbreviated to the ugly hybrid *agitprop*: in the land of the Soviets. Where statecraft is otherwise at a loss, where a seemingly impossible task has to be performed, support is found in faith in the miraculous power of enlightenment, of persuasion, of the systematic harnessing of the masses to the attainment of the object in view. But all deep and genuine faith in miracles that we hold with all our strength is really capable of working miracles. The history of propaganda in the Soviet East, in the backward territories of the former Tsarist Empire, is particularly rich in these miracles. It was more necessary there than elsewhere to give play to all the arts of propaganda, if the great historic achievement of awakening the women of the Russian East to a new life was to succeed.

One of the first steps of the Soviet authorities was to introduce equal rights for women and men in economic, social, and political life. Russian women, thanks to their historic development and their mental constitution, were fully capable of taking possession of the new opportunities opened up to them. But in the Soviet East conditions were totally different. Here there had been no initial steps to pave the way for propaganda; the work had to be begun at the roots, in the sense that the roots of all things are to be found in man himself.

If the women of the Russian East were to be freed

from century old oppression, it was necessary for propaganda to reach the women themselves, and that was a task of considerable difficulty from the very first, thanks to the patriarchal social structure of countries that were almost entirely Mohammedan. Not only were the women to whom the new order brought freedom oppressed, they were also, as we know, often hidden behind the walls of their own separate chambers, the *ichkaris*, and in some districts so thickly veiled that no breath could reach them from the outer world, sedulously guarded from all education and culture, so much so that at first the evangel of freedom failed to penetrate to them. Even working women had no contact with public life, participation in which was a masculine privilege. In these lands new methods of enlightenment had to be invented, unknown in Central Russia, in order that the women might in the first instance merely hear of the rights accorded to them. Not till that first step had been taken could there be any thought of educating the women, now aware of their freedom, to make use of their rights, to co-operate in building up the new life.

Even the first phase, the enlightenment of the women in the matter of their equal rights under the new régime, took years, and even now we can only regard it as accomplished in broad outline. In certain countries of the Soviet East it was some time before the authorities ventured so much as to approach the women's question. For instance, in the early days of Soviet rule in Turkmenia Communist speakers merely extolled the achievements of the new régime in a general way, without mentioning the women's question in particular. It was regarded as dangerous to touch upon the question in public meetings, although the governing party was well aware from the first that there can be no revolution without the liberation of the women and that therefore "the national minorities must address all their efforts to pushing this point in the programme."

At first it was almost only men who took part in the work of enlightenment and propaganda. Until 1918 or 1919 it was hardly possible to make use of the assistance of native women. It was years before the women of the Eastern republics began to take part in the work of their own liberation, and even then it was only older women who advocated the new ideas and the new way of life at first; not till later did the younger ones follow.

As I have said, propaganda had to be adapted everywhere in the East to the local conditions. Both the men's opposition and the women's timidity—for at first they did not attend meetings, much less schools and courses—rendered new methods necessary, and especially new institutions, suited to the peculiar circumstances. And so, in addition to the *Shenoidyel*, the Women's Section organized on the model of the central Russian body, a number of special women's clubs sprang up, adapted to local conditions, Red Corners, Red Boats, Red *Turtas*, Women's Shops, and Mountaineer Women's Huts, as outposts of the struggle against the enslavement of women. At first all these were only open to women, whom they instructed in the new Soviet legislation and the new spirit. For only by excluding men was it possible to induce the women of the East gradually to overcome the timidity in which they had been brought up for centuries. Only where they knew that they were safe from the eyes of strange men did they come in constantly growing numbers, uncovered their faces, and opened their hearts freely in the circle of fellow women about their sorrows and cares.

The CLUBS constituted the first general and widespread form of work among the masses, genuine elementary schools of the women's movement. At the moment when the women of Central Asia and the Caucasus crossed their thresholds and began to attend them, still anxiously wrapped round in their *chadras* and *paranjas*, they had taken the first timid, but irreversible step leading them from the narrow confines

of the *ichkaris* out into the open. For thousands and thousands the road to the Women's Club was the road to a new, undreamed of future.

The first to be established was the ALI BAIRAMOV CLUB in Baku, now the largest women's club in the Union and known as THE PALACE OF CULTURE OF LIBERATED TURKISH WOMEN. But from 1920-22 onwards further clubs were established in all the cities and villages. By 1926 they were 87 in number, and two years later 103. Side by side with the clubs smaller centres of instruction were everywhere set up: the Red Corners, whose number rose between 1926 and 1929 from 218 to 364, whilst the number of women organized in them increased from 30,000 to 65,000. A special variety of club in the agricultural districts of Central Asia are the "Houses for Dekhkan (peasant) Women," and in the Caucasus the Mountaineer Women's Huts.

And now these clubs took the lead in the struggle for the liberation of women in the East, and still retain it. They use all methods to rouse the women, to educate them as conscious human beings, useful, active members of the community, and to uproot ancient prejudices. The clubs are now no longer closed, purely feminine institutions, as they were at first; men lecture in them, and they are already general centres of education and culture.

At the outset the clubs are chiefly concerned with legal questions. They call attention principally to the laws that affect women, so that women may understand them and profit by them. For instant, in Kazakhstan judges have been appointed for the YURTAS. The second stage was marked by the stress laid on cultural efforts: e.g. LIKBES CENTRES (instructional centres for the liquidation of illiteracy), training in various civilized customs, medical aid, educational advice, theatrical performances, and lectures were offered in varied succession to the members. In the third stage the principal stress was laid upon introducing women into the

processes of production and the members were trained as skilled workers.

This latter point is well known to be one of the most important in the Union's constructive plan. It is closely associated with the Five Years' Plan, by which the general industrialization of the whole Soviet East was projected and carried out. In many districts in the East, the Women's Clubs organized women's training courses for various kinds of factory work and trades. The Baku Women's Club established the first needlework shop, which has since grown to a regular factory, and the number of women employees has risen rapidly in a few years from twenty to over a thousand. The same club has two trade schools, one for needlework and one for knitting; the girls who have passed through it either go to work in the factory or are appointed teachers in the co-operative of home workers. So, too, the training of the first Turkish women in Azerbaijan as machine-minders and midwives is the outcome of the labours of this largest Women's Club in the Soviet East. It likewise set up the first courses for sick nurses, telephone girls, and teachers, and other clubs have since followed its example.

At the present time the clubs are greatly valued by the people throughout the Soviet East, and the times are long past when Uzbek men, for instance, tried to keep their wives and daughters from attending the clubs by the threat that their veils would be torn from them and they themselves would be treated with violence. It is true that one still comes across women who are held back by the power of tradition and by prejudice from finding their way to the clubs, and so to the new life.

Involuntarily I am reminded of a scene that I witnessed in Tashkent: a woman, still apparently young, though that is never clearly recognizable under the *paranja*, stood before the door of the house in which the club has its quarters. For some minutes she stood there motionless,

turned her head right and left, plainly glancing nervously around her and wondering in alarm what her husband, her mother-in-law, or her neighbours would say. At last she made up her mind to stretch out her arm and take hold of the handle. But her very hand trembled, and it seemed as if she would not be able to bring herself to open the door. . . . This image of inner hesitation and shrinking gave me a vision of the inner struggles of many, many women in the East. But this woman did at last make up her mind to turn the handle, and, like her, more and more women of Central Asia summon up courage to enter the club; one does not wait long outside the door of a better future.

Besides the clubs the WOMEN'S SHOPS have proved valuable in every way as small centres of agitation. In many parts of Central Asia the women might not even go to the bazaars before the Revolution. Thus a Women's Shop is a remarkable sight in the Soviet East, regarded purely externally. On the door is a notice: No admittance for men. When you enter you find yourself in a room in which are only women in *paranjas*. They have thrown back their *chachvans*, the horsehair nets with which they generally cover their faces with sedulous care, and here, in the shop, they seem to feel at home. Some of them turn the materials over and over that are laid out for sale; others are shown various wares standing on the shelves, whilst others again have come out of sheer curiosity.

There is plenty of noise in the room, which is often visited by hundreds of women during the day. They all talk at once, the children they have brought with them shout or scream, and most visitors look round in astonishment. For not only are there various goods for sale, but there are posters on the walls with gay coloured drawings to instruct the women about hygiene, the care of babies, and other things: all matters hitherto unknown to them. Doctors frequently come to the Women's Shop and agitate among the customers, trying to persuade them

to come to the clinic and bring their children to be examined. Further, the women are told about their new rights, here as everywhere else, and as they drink tea someone reads them the wall newspaper and a special illustrated women's journal; in this way the propaganda carried on in an apparently harmless place like this often proves much more far-reaching than would at first appear.

Among the nomads, the RED YURTAS fulfil the same purpose as the Women's Clubs, the Red Corners, and the Women's Shops in towns and villages, the Mountain-eer Women's Huts in the inaccessible *auls* of the Caucasus, or the *Dekhkan* Women's Houses in the agricultural districts of Central Asia. Their chief activity is propaganda among the nomad inhabitants of what was formerly Turkistan. A. Nukhrat describes one of these *Yurtas* in Kazakhstan:

Our car approached its destination. . . . In the broad valley in the steppes a red flag waved us a greeting above a white *yurta*, like a tongue of flame. "We shall be there in a moment," said my companion with satisfaction. "Here is our *Yurta*. . . . And I think there is a big crowd awaiting us." . . . The *Yurta* stood apart in a roadless meadow, and really was surrounded by a big crowd of men and women. They saw us in the distance, many hastened to meet us, and a troop of children raced towards our car to stare in amazement at the marvellous "devil's machine."

The *Yurta* was almost at the centre of the valley, and stood out among the surrounding dwelling *yurtas* by its size, the dazzling whiteness of its felt covering, and the little banners that hung round it like a garland. No one could miss a *yurta* like that, nor pass it by; it draws the curious gaze of the nomad herdsman like a magnet.

At close quarters, too, it made a favourable impression: A heavy, bright coloured curtain hung over the entrance, upon which a motto in the Kazakh language might be read upon a red background, a friendly invitation to enter the club, to learn, to begin a new life. Round about the *Yurta* the meadow was levelled and neat. At the moment there were some forty persons, men and women, before the entrance. Most of them gathered around us

full of curiosity. The manageress of the *Yurta*, a young Kazakh woman with long plaits and a red kerchief over her head, stepped forth from among the crowd, welcomed us joyfully, and led us inside.

There we sat down on low basket stools, like children's chairs, and began to survey the inside of the *Yurta* curiously. Everything shone with cleanliness and the atmosphere was one of homely comfort. The *Yurta* was divided in two by a light coloured curtain of strong material. The smaller half, with white painted furniture, served as a doctor's consulting room. In the other the walls were covered with posters in Russian, Kazakh, and Tatar. Most of them dealt with the protection of motherhood, the care of children, and hygiene. Only two or three, issued by the Commissariat for Agriculture in Kazakhstan, gave information about gardening and the cultivation of vegetables. To the left, in the prettiest part, was the Lenin Corner, with a little bust of the Teacher, hung with red. The bust stood on a shelf decked with fresh flowers and grass. The floor of the *Yurta* was covered with fresh sand, and in every corner were spittoons.

For a little we all remained silent and took it all in, then we exchanged glances, and spoke with one voice: "Lovely."

As appears from this description a *Yurta* serves partly as a consulting room, partly as a club. It helps women in childbirth, for a midwife and a medical assistant are attached to the *Yurta*, and legal advice is also given, mainly on questions of divorce and property. People often come from a distance to seek advice. Great importance is likewise attached to the work of enlightenment, carried on by an "instructor." Every *Yurta* has a newspaper circle. The newspapers, sent by the *Yurta* Centre in Moscow, have special pages for beginners in reading and writing. Then there are wall newspapers made in the *Yurta* itself. Once a week there is reading aloud. The nomad women gather in troops. A carpet is spread, and entertaining speeches alternate with serious, and instructive debates. Every *Yurta*, too, has its choir and dramatic circle. Special so-called *byt* circles carry on cultural propaganda and teach the women how they should keep their *yurta* tidy, wash

up the crockery, and mind the children. And, as a tangible product of civilization, soap is occasionally distributed among the people of the steppes, and they are shown exactly how to use it.

Of course politics are not neglected. The women are told about their rights, and especially about their right to vote. And, as there is a Lenin Corner in every *Turta* with a bust of *Lenin*, so every lecture or discussion is opened in the name of the leader of the Russian Revolution. The inhabitants of these desert regions often hardly know what Bolshevism and revolution mean, but all of them have heard the name of Lenin, all of them can tell something about him. The electric lamps which are already to be found in the tent villages of the nomads—as well as wireless sets—are called “Ilyich lamps” (Ilyich is the popular name for Lenin in Russia). And far away in the depths of the Ural steppes the Bashkirs sing and recite:

Over the steppes of Siberia flutter
Birds in coloured array;
Grey-headed Lenin mastered a riddle,
Taught us and vanished away.

Over the steppes of Siberia circle
Birds from afar so gay;
Grey-headed Lenin, the mighty teacher,
Spoke a word and vanished away.

Each *Turta* has its own camel and a manservant whose duty it is to keep the *Turta* clean and transport it. At first the Red *Turtas* themselves carried on a nomad existence among the nomads. Now they generally remain for some time at one place, or move about for several months with one group. Whereas at first they generally had to be conducted by men, they are now almost all under the management of native women. Their popularity and prestige is steadily growing, men come to them more and more, and as for the women, in

the Kara-Kash District the Kazakh women have composed a little song with a refrain something like this: "O *Yurta* that pointest a way of escape from darkness to Kazakh women, where art thou?" And there is a four-lined verse:

In our village stands a *Yurta*,
On the green, the good, Red *Yurta* ;
There our sorrows all are laid,
Comfort there we find, and aid.

When one of these *Yurtas* makes its appearance on the steppes, all the nomads for miles round are stirred to the utmost excitement. The news of the arrival of the Red *Yurta* spreads from one nomad camp to another as if by wireless telegraphy; indeed the inconceivable rapidity with which rumours spread on the steppes has given rise to the expression *usunkulat*, long-ears. Men and women come galloping on fleet little steppe horses from distances of fifty to sixty versts (from thirty-five to forty miles), or they come on foot or ride camels of doubtful quality and stubborn oxen. Peddlers soon appear and offer their wares in loud voices. Then the most celebrated musicians and minstrels from all around are invited to the opening celebrations. Often conferences are held on such days for non-party women so as to familiarize the people with the *Yurta* and encourage them to co-operate.

Once again I will call upon A. Nukhrat to describe one of these OPENING CELEBRATIONS, for she was a leading worker among the women of Central Asia for years:

On that day, too, the people gathered in numbers. There were people of all ages in the noisy, chattering crowd. Young girls in gay dresses, with silver ornaments at the breast and waving feathers in their caps, clung anxiously to the skirts of their worthy mothers, who carried babies in their arms. Boisterous lads romped on the meadow, on horseback, and also round about our car. Men of all ages sat together in a narrow circle and listened to

what a young fellow, a *komssomolets* read them from a newspaper, stammering in his embarrassment. One or two of the older men in the audience listened with close attention. Every now and then one of them went up to the reader, peered into his mouth, fingered the newspaper, and returned to his place. Involuntarily I reflected that many of those present were seeing a newspaper for the first time in their lives. The young people were less attentive, and some of the young men turned continually to look with interest at the women and girls.

And now the celebration began. Outside the *Yurta* a drum was beaten, the next moment a gramophone began to play a gay march, and the crowd made straight for the *Yurta*.

Near it stood a table with a red cloth with several benches, and the manageress of the *Yurta* was hurriedly arranging paper, pens, inkpots, a jug of water, and even a little bell upon it. The others were busy settling the audience: the women and children in the front row, near the table, and the men behind. They all sat down on the ground, and only very few made use of the felt mat. At last all was quiet and the gramophone stopped playing.

The manageress invited the President of the *aul* Soviet, the *komssomolets*, a woman who was a member of the Soviet, and all of us who had come from the town, to take our seats at the table, and opened the formal proceedings with a short speech. She thanked all present for coming to the opening of the *Yurta*, and asked them to listen attentively and take note of all the proceedings. . . .

Then Nagime was called on to speak; she spoke fervently of the rights of women, and said how the Soviet Government cared for working women; she spoke of the aims of the *Yurta* and ended with an appeal to come to it often. Then the President of the Soviet spoke, and the woman member of the Soviet followed with a few words in the name of her fellow women.

The audience listened eagerly to all the speeches, and even the little children were quiet, or were hurriedly given the breast, if they began to cry. . . .

With the welcoming speeches the formal part of the celebration ended, and during the pause that followed, the visitors were invited to drink a cup of tea and inspect the inside of the *Yurta*. The men and women now approached the boiling kettles, served by the older people, and each filled his or her *piala* (cup without a handle) with the golden liquid, talking hard the while, and sat down on the spot to drink it. Then each one went up to old

Altyn to thank her diffusely for her hospitality, and afterwards repaired to the *Yurta*. The tea-drinking and the inspection of the *Yurta* lasted for full half-an-hour, whilst the gramophone bellowed unceasingly, rousing the unabated curiosity of the boys and little girls.

During this pause we were all busy with the manageress, the President of the *aul* Soviet, and the attendant *komssomolets* in preparing the concert that made part of the programme. We pushed the table against the wall of the *Yurta* and arranged the benches so as to make something like a stage on a flat piece of ground, and here the performers were to appear.

A sunburnt boy of six or seven with sparkling black eyes scampered round the crowd with a bell, and the concert began.

The first performer was Murtabay, the old minstrel and reciter of tales. Accompanying himself on a two-stringed *dutar* (a kind of balalaika), he sang of the famous heroes of the Kazakh people, of the Soviet Government, and of Lenin. He was followed by a *komssomolets* choir which sang new *byt* and revolutionary songs.

Then the President of the *aul* Soviet told a short, comic tale about a rich Tatar who had four wives that quarrelled every day and sometimes even beat their own husband. And after the amusing tale came—for the first time for thousands of years on the wide Kazakh steppes—the performance of a one-act play written by a native Kazakh author and published in a native journal. The actors were Nagime, Karambayeva, the manageress of the *Yurta*, and a *komssomolets*. One of the women represented the *Shenotdyel*, another a girl, the third the girl's mother, and the *komssomolets*—a *bey*. The mother, a poor widow, had sold her daughter to the *bey*, who sat pompously on the felt mat, drank tea and ate meat, and not only obliged his wife to do all the heavy work, but mocked her and beat her from time to time with a knout. He drove his wife's mother out of the house and held back part of the *kalym*. Then the injured old woman went to the *Shenotdyel*, and the awe-inspiring *Shenotdyel*, in the person of Nagime, arrested the *bey*, who wept and fell on his knees and was dreadfully afraid of prison.

That was the end of the performance, which made a great impression on the audience; a number of girls and women were moved to tears, and the men—laughed. When the *bey* was dragged away to prison many of the audience shouted after him.

After the performance, and after the old minstrel and the *komssomolets* had repeated their songs, the most important part of the festival came, the wrestling and races. A committee of five was speedily elected from among the audience, a circle drawn, and two young men stepped forward to wrestle in a match conducted according to all the rules of the steppes. The audience watched every movement exactly and gave loud expression to their thoughts. Three pair of wrestlers followed in succession. Each of the victors received a quarter of a pound of tea and a pound of sugar. And then when, as an extra turn, two little boys of eight and ten leapt into the ring and likewise began a wrestling match that degenerated into a match of fisticuffs, they were rewarded by an outbreak of mocking laughter.

After the wrestling followed the races. Seven little horses, of no special beauty, ridden by little boys, set out at a gallop all at once. The crowd awaited their return in great excitement, and the winners, who received four prizes, were greeted with a storm of applause.

Darkness was falling when the festival came to an end and the guests returned to their homes. . . .

There were 1,927 of these *Red Yurtas* in Kazakhstan, in the Kalmuck steppes, and in Buriat-Mongolia alone, and some dozens in Urotia.

Propaganda among the women of the inhospitable North is similar to that among the women of Central Asia and the rest of Asiatic Russia; what the RED YURTA is to the nomads of the central districts, the RED CHUM, the RED BOAT, and the like, are to the fishing and hunting peoples of Northern Asia.

Hitherto I have discussed the organization of the spread of enlightenment as it has developed in the Soviet East since the October Revolution. We now come to the question of the detailed progress of the work, now and in the past, and of the results achieved.

All the work of enlightening the masses of women, incorporating them in the community, and winning their co-operation for economic, political, and cultural constructive plans, was begun in the *Shenotdyel*, the Women's Section. We have statistics of the progress

attained. Thus in 1924 there were some 5,000 native women organized in Central Asia to take part in the work of the Women's Sections, and a year later the number was 15,000; these figures have a far greater significance here than elsewhere, since it was a question of nomad women, widely scattered and difficult to reach. And the same progress in the liberation of the women is found in all its aspects. As in all undertakings in the Soviet Union, the weapon of social competition was called in aid. Thus whole Republics—Uzbekistan and Turkmenia, Buriat-Mongolia and Urotia—had competitions to encourage the carrying out of all the laws concerning the women's movement.

For the reasons already explained, there was at first no question of receiving assistance from the women to be liberated, the women of the Soviet East. The history of the struggle for liberation in the East after the October Revolution begins with an uplifting example of feminine solidarity acting in spite of all national differences. European Russia provided the first leaders of the struggle which the women of the East were neither able nor willing to carry on themselves, for, though liberated according to the letter of the law, they were in fact still slaves. The deeds of Russian women in these disturbed years of struggle for the liberation of their sisters in the East will, perhaps, someday be recorded in a special chapter in the history of liberated Eastern women, a chapter not lacking in examples of unwearying energy, of selfless readiness for sacrifice, and, indeed, of actual martyrdom.

The first workers in the *Shenotdyel* throughout the East were Russians, for the most part ignorant of the native language, which added to the difficulty, already great, of gaining access to the Eastern women. What, then, did they do? These Russian women began by paying visits to their native sisters, and carried on their agitation in baths, market-places, and the streets. In the written memoirs of these champions of freedom

among the women of the East, we read of their activities in Bukhara, for instance:

We began our labours in a district where until quite recently the people would hear nothing of the appearance of women in public meetings, where the workers of the *Shenotdyel* were stopped in the streets by their opponents even when they entered into conversation with men, and where the European women working with the Women's Section were in daily danger of being poisoned or otherwise got rid of.

Under these circumstances the Russian women themselves had to put on a *paranja* in order to gain entry into the families. What a historical paradox! In order that the Mussulman women might lay aside her veil, the Russian woman must put one on. This is how the work was carried on during the early years, especially in Bukhara, the former centre of Mussulman Turkistan, but also elsewhere. With veiled faces and a gift in their hands, the women of the *Shenotdyel* entered the *ichkaris*, as if all they had in mind were a comfortable chat between women over a cup of tea. They generally came on feast days or market days, when the men were not at home and the women could breathe a little more freely; and so they forged links and slowly but surely undermined the prison walls—actual and symbolic—that seemed almost unscalable. These were the first harbingers of women's liberation in the East. But others were soon to follow them: whole troops of European Russian women, who came from home with a burning conviction that they were taking part in a great historic mission by helping to break the bonds of their sisters throughout the wide East. Thus they have worked unwearyingly since 1923, the year in which Uzbekistan was purged of the counter-revolution, there and elsewhere in all Central Asia. It was certainly exceedingly difficult to reach the strictly confined women. But the brave pioneers would not allow themselves to be frightened away by difficulties or by dangers, which often

threatened their lives. Even funerals offered a welcome opportunity of getting into conversation with the women, and resort had often to be taken to other ruses in order to deceive the watchfulness of Islamic husbands, jealous of the *namus*, the honour, of their wives, men who hated the *Shenotdyel* even more than the much feared G.P.U., and called it the *Jinotdyel*, which means the devil's chancellor.

The President of the *Shenotdyel* in Nukha in Azerbaijan had not so very long ago to go about veiled, so that people should take her for a respectable woman and admit her to their houses, where she carried on her agitation. But the ruse often failed, and more than one Russian woman has lost her life as the price of her daring. One case of a Russian agitator who was murdered while working in the country of the Ingushes was especially widely known and much discussed in Soviet circles. Thus it was Russians who were the first martyrs of women's freedom in the East; native women followed later, and often paid with their lives for their insubordination against a yoke hallowed by century-old custom.

Bogachova, formerly head of the *Shenotdyel* in Merv, writes as follows in a letter:

At first neither men nor women could understand the aim of our labours, and they all met us with suspicion and set the dogs on us in the *auls*. As soon as we approached an *aul*, dozens of dogs leapt out upon us from behind the *kibitkas* and flew at our horses. But sometimes it was even worse. One evening we rode to an *aul* in the Poltaratsk district: myself, a student at the Eastern University, and, as third, a militia woman. We went to the President, in whose *kibitka* we found three men. They were just drinking tea, and they listened to our request and said: "We cannot call our women together; the men won't allow it." But one of the fellows winked at the President and said in the Turkman language: "Don't send her away. We can make use of her to-night." I understand Turkman well, but I pretended to suspect nothing. So we kept watch all night, with our revolvers in our hands. But the President, who saw from this that we were

well able to defend ourselves, thought better of it and summoned a women's meeting on the next day.

The Russian authoress, *V. Gerassimova*, tells the story of another propaganda trip in Uzbekistan:

It was March 8th (Women's Day) when a Russian *Shenotdyel* woman betook herself with two "active" Uzbek women to a remote district to prepare the celebration of International Women's Day there. All three were closely wrapped round in *paranjas* and *chachvans* so as not to be recognized. They took a *dutar* with them, a native two-stringed instrument which one of the Uzbek women played with skill, and which was an important item in her propagandist activities; for the quickest way to the hearts of Uzbek women is through gay music.

The district to which they were journeying was notorious for the *basmaches* who ravaged it. The very day before three women had been murdered there, simply because they dared to attend a meeting. Their heads were seen the next day floating in the *aryk*, the drainage canal of a neighbouring village. The murder was perpetrated near the *kibitka* in which the three women meant to spend the night. As their coming had been announced, a number of women awaited them there. But before the talk was well begun, one of the strangers was drawn aside by a newly arrived woman and warned that the enemy had detected the object of their visit, and that the husband of one of them, the Uzbek agitator, had sworn to kill his wife and her two companions, and was already near at hand.

After a brief whispered consultation, the three agitators told the assembled women that they were wandering musicians, who earned their livelihood by singing and dancing. One of the Uzbek women, the Central Asian official, Tajikhan Shadiyeva, now famous throughout the Union, took her *dutar* and began to sing a song, the words of which were in keeping with her demeanour:

"Dost thou think my heart is a water *kumgan*
In which thou canst make tea?
Whither shall I turn, to whom shall I confide
The grief of a sorrowful, cheated woman?"

But the other two women were also obliged to offer samples of their supposed art. For the second Uzbek woman, who was young and beautiful and could dance, it was easy. But the Russian

Shenotdyel worker, a textile hand from Ivanovo, the Manchester of Russia, was already advanced in years; in the town she wore heavy boots and moved so clumsily that there was danger of her being detected. Luckily the Uzbek audience thought the dance was a parody, and were so well entertained by it that the dancers were able to continue for hours and nearly dropped with weariness.

Towards midnight, when at last the women set forth, the three agitators succeeded in making their escape in the darkness before the husband was able to carry out his murderous intention.

Russian women who have worked in the East, especially in Central Asia, tell of dozens of such cases. They reveal clearly the dangers and privations suffered during their labours by these silent heroines of the great awakening among the women of the Soviet East, heroines who still deliberately remain in the background. Nevertheless, these Eastern women loved and honoured the Russian *Shenotdyelkas* with heart and soul, and have to this day many songs celebrating their deeds.

Mrs. A. Aksentovich, the widow of a famous old Russian revolutionary and herself an old revolutionary, was for many years the head of the Central Asian Bureau in Tashkent, now abolished; she rendered great services to the women's movement, and was complete mistress of the Uzbek language. She told me the following delightful story of an experience at the beginning of her activities there:

It was in 1924, just when she had organized one of the first co-operatives in Guzel Orda, the former capital of Kazakhstan, in which the native women spun wool, made *khalats*, etc. She had begun the work with a bare dozen members, and a year later the number of Kazakh women employed had risen to five hundred. Of course *Likhs* Centres had sprung up all around, besides reading circles, Red Corners, and crèches, and a number of the women had been promoted to special posts.

And so those in charge of the work of enlightenment, which had at first been confined to the town, thought that now they could extend it to the *kishlaks*, the surrounding settlements. *Mrs. Aksentovich*, who is a trained midwife, had in any case made

trips to surrounding villages several times to give her professional services.

Once she was called up in the night and asked to hasten at once to a woman in a *kishlak* which meant a ride of fifty miles across the steppes. Without a moment's hesitation she responded to the call of the Kazakh who had come to her. When she reached the spot she found two *kibitkas*, and in one, that was quite dark and full of smoke, a number of wailing women and one unconscious woman, stretched upon the ground in a high fever. She grasped the situation immediately upon her arrival, and realized that the slightest inadvertance on her part might cost her life, on account of the people's great ignorance and superstition. She decided to make one condition. "Since you have fetched me from a distance of fifty miles, I require that all those who do not belong here, and first and foremost the men, shall leave the tent."

It was full a quarter of an hour before her demand had been considered and fulfilled by those present, before she could examine the patient undisturbed and find out that she was suffering from serious inflammation in consequence of the after-birth not having passed away. . . . More than ever Aksentovich felt that her own life was at stake.

She hurriedly boiled the instruments she had brought with her in a *samovar* and set to work, and the operation was soon successfully performed. Towards morning the patient recovered consciousness, her pulse was much better, and she even managed to speak a few words in a feeble voice: "Ah, now I, too, shall live," thought her rescuer, and decided to remain for a day or two longer in the *kibitka*.

Nobody now doubted that the patient was out of danger, and the heroine of the day made a careful inspection of the *aul*, which proved to be fairly large, and resolved to continue her activities there.

A week later the same Kazakh appeared unexpectedly with his wife and child and a fat sheep, and said: "Never can there be friendship between us if you refuse to accept this sheep as a present."

"But I demand something else," retorted Mrs. Aksentovich. "Send your wife and let her tell the other women what happened to her." The man turned to his wife, and said: "Since your rescuer wishes it, you must do as she desires."

So one day all the women of the *kishlak* were assembled and the woman whose life had been saved, Gulim Khan, with her son in her arms, poured forth her story eagerly and fluently. The impression was overwhelming and the authority of the Russian woman rose sky high at once.

"If I had required them to submit to the knife, they would hardly have hesitated a moment," Mrs. Aksentovich concluded her story; "but I said: From henceforth Gulim Khan was my representative, and I opened the first *Likbes* Centre there. And when, in 1924, I left Kazakhstan, there was quite a large group of active women, and Gulim Khan was not only my representative, but had learnt to read and write."

This same Mrs. Aksentovich told me of another case, to show what difficulties faced the Russian women, even when no immediate danger threatened them. Mrs. Veimarn, who had worked for some years in Tajikistan, in a village in the Pamir Mountains, and there contracted tuberculosis, received orders to return to European Russia and at the same time to bring something "alive" with her. That is, seventeen youths and girls who were being sent to Moscow to study. They descended to the town of Osh, where the young people had their first sight of a motor omnibus, with which they were to proceed; they began to tremble, clung to one another, and declared obstinately that nothing would induce them to enter the thing. But after long persuasion, for which it was necessary to appeal to the local authorities for their assistance, they did travel to Andijan, whence they were to continue their journey by rail. Once more, the company declared that they refused to be burnt, and declined to enter the train. Again and again the same proceedings were repeated, and when one of the passengers was obliged to retire, he insisted on his wife accompanying him and not leaving him alone, whereupon the rest, who would have been no less frightened at being left without surveillance, followed him too. So it continued till they reached Tashkent, and even beyond. A year later, when Mrs. Veimarn saw her protégés again in

Moscow, she hardly recognized them. They had become quite civilized in the interval.

Mrs. Ross, too, told me a great deal about the various forms of agitation, which has to be worked out experimentally in each country to suit the local circumstances; she worked at first among the women of the towns of Uzbekistan, but was then sent to Turkmenia, where the population is mainly nomad and where there are, for the most part, *auls* and hardly any real towns. As a beginning a co-operative was organized for carpet weaving, to which we shall recur; the men generally guarded their wives personally, so that no one should enter into conversation with them, but even this precaution did not always achieve its aim. The "travelling obstetric *kibitkas*" and the "travelling medical consulting centres" were exploited in the same way; whilst the doctor or midwife questioned and examined the women, they tried to lead on to other subjects of conversation and to enlighten them about various matters. "We never knew," this woman told me, "when we left home, whether we should return safe and sound, especially during the civil war."

It is worth mentioning, moreover, that in addition to the selfless labours of Russian women among those of the Soviet East, much was done by Tatar women of Kazan and the Crimea, whose position, even in the Russia of former days, was freer than that of other Islamic women; they never wore the veil and attended Russian schools, and they proved excellent mediators because they could speak Russian and Tatar, and so communicate with both parties.

Thus, and in like ways, Russian women worked and are still working in the vast area of the Soviet East, sacrificing their health and strength, and in some cases even their lives, in order to bring culture and civilized manners to backward and formerly oppressed peoples. . . .

In Western Europe the phrase "emancipation of

women " almost inevitably stirs memories of the struggle of the English protagonists of women's rights, whose activities were political through and through and often inspired by hostility to men. In the East, likewise, the women's movement sometimes found similar expression. But it was a principle of propaganda that the main stress was to be laid on cultural work and that the political aspect was to take second rank. The following story is a typical illustration of what I mean: a man in Urotia had shut his wife into the barn so that she might not be able to go to a meeting, for which she had been chosen delegate. In her stead he went himself to hear what the womenfolk would say. Just as he arrived it chanced that someone was telling how fowls ought to be kept in order to get more eggs. The man returned home thereupon and let his wife out, and himself sent her to the meeting where such useful things were discussed. The cultural propaganda thus put to the fore assumed the most various and sometimes curious forms.

In many of the national territories so-called " CULTURAL ATTACKS " have been made on a mass scale in recent years. Hundreds of " cultural soldiers " came from the towns—working men and women, *komssomoletses*, and students—to the villages, *kolkhoses*, and *sovkhoses*, with doctors, lawyers, travelling locksmiths, dramatic groups and choirs, and voluntary medical troops. They passed through the *auls*, showed the people how to keep their dwellings clean, to use soap, to bring up the children, to plant vegetables, and wash up crockery. They brought medical aid to the people, who had never before seen a doctor or a medical assistant, they established Red Corners and crèches. The cultural soldiers mended the agricultural implements and helped in the *kolkhoses* in the labours of seed-time and harvest. These cultural attacks were particularly widespread among the Kalmucks. In 1931 no less than 45,000 cultural soldiers were sent to them for four months.

No less interesting was the cultural attack in Turkmenia on Women's Day in 1928. A day's attack was made on the old village. The cultural soldiers marched into the villages with banners, songs, and bands, bringing with them bowls of soap, medical appliances, and a puppet theatre. They entered the poverty-stricken huts singly. The *komssomoletses* rolled up their sleeves and washed the children, and gave the place a thorough cleaning. The doctors who had come with them visited the sick and gave them treatment; and members of the Government of Turkmenia attached themselves to the troop in order to hear the people's complaints. "Red gifts" brought from peasants and workers were distributed on all sides. At the end of the meeting the show began, and the puppet theatre was a great success in a play dealing with the protection of childhood and motherhood.

Mass entertainments and festivals are very popular throughout the Soviet East. From time immemorial the Bashkirs have held a festival of the plough, the *Ssabantuy*, often lasting for several days, and there are similar celebrations among other peoples in which ancient customs come to the surface. At the common banquets the rules of modern hygiene are generally hopelessly neglected; indeed, the knowledge of them is not very widespread. But now these ancient festivals are acquiring a new meaning; propaganda is taking possession of them more and more, so that they are associated with the distribution of food prepared on model lines to the poor, with exhibitions and lectures, and are exploited in every way for the instruction of the backward masses.

Nobody who knew the Russian East as it was formerly can be surprised that the demands of cleanliness and health, elsewhere a matter of course, occupy a large place in this propaganda. For it is often addressed to peoples who have to be taught the most primitive requirements of civilization before there can be any hope

of raising them to the standard of culture aimed at. This applies especially to the Northern Asiatic peoples. On the island of Kamchatka a bathroom was built in the course of cultural propaganda which was not used by the men for a very long time, and not at all by the women. They had to be induced by persuasion and presents to use the bath. The cultural soldiers who achieved this after prolonged efforts recounted it as a great triumph, which, indeed, it was.

Nor were like conditions uncommon elsewhere in the Russian East. In some districts the women never washed their *khalats*, and the more spots of grease there were, the richer the owner was held to be. There is a proverb which says that the Kalmucks have not washed for some three thousand years. If we consider all this, we may grasp what a success it is for the propagandist efforts that nowadays *khalats* are washed, that more and more soap is used, and that like new needs are constantly arising.

As might be expected, the propaganda was extended to MIDWIFERY and INFANT WELFARE. I have already described the horrible state of both before the Revolution, how deeply rooted was the custom of sending women for their delivery to a hut dripping with filth, that outraged all conceptions of hygiene and stood outside the house, often outside the village; and the case of infant welfare was much the same. Let me give one example only. All over the East a kind of cradle was in use and still is which is called a *bishik* in Central Asia, to which the child is bound firmly, and covered with a thick counterpane, even over its face—supposedly to protect it from the flies—beneath which it is almost stifled. A little drain-pipe is fixed in the mattress between its legs, leading to a chamber beneath the cradle; and if the child cries when it gets wet, the mother bends over the cradle to suckle it. It is very rarely taken out of its cage, and still more rarely, indeed never, washed. Among the cattle-breeding Kalmucks the newborn

child is wrapped in a lambskin, which it keeps on until it is able to crawl out of it itself. The consequence of these and like conditions, which it is impossible to describe fully, is, of course, a terribly high INFANT DEATH-RATE.

In accordance with the Soviet population policy, which is forwarded by every possible means and everywhere lays the principal stress on the protection of motherhood and childhood, systematic efforts are made in the East to extirpate these countless bad habits and sombre superstitions and to secure for motherhood the respect accorded by all civilized peoples. I have already spoken of the successful efforts of the clubs in this matter, but all available means of propaganda are devoted to this end, and already with visible results. Midwives from the Red *Yurtas* come to pregnant women in the most remote villages to stand by them in their hour of trial. Everywhere there are travelling exhibitions for pregnant women and courses of instruction in the protection of motherhood.

Again, the struggle against epidemics is carried on on a vast scale; we have terrible figures of their former extent. Thus until recently 70 per cent of the Chuvashes, and probably a similar percentage of the Turkmans and other Eastern peoples, were suffering from trachoma, and syphilis was exceedingly widespread. These figures are now being constantly reduced.

MOCK TRIALS constitute a peculiar form of the campaign for enlightenment in the Soviet East. Perhaps they represent the most successful attempt to raise the broad mass of the native population to a higher standard of life. The accused in these trials are generally drunkards, opium smokers, men who beat their wives and children, women who do not keep their huts clean and make fires without a chimney, syphilitics, and, not infrequently, lifeless objects, which produces a most grotesque effect.

Here is a description of one of these trials, given by the woman who organized it:

The accused were a dirty dress and an unwashed kettle. We had announced in the *auls* that on a particular day a judge would arrive and conduct the proceedings. When the day came great crowds assembled. We had prepared a scenario and allotted the parts. The judge and assessors were genuine, but I played the part of public prosecutor and the accused were represented by the manageress of the *Yurta*.

When the proceedings began, nothing special struck the audience at first, for it all looked like a proper trial. Only they were a little surprised to see beside the prisoner's box an old, ragged, and incredibly dirty woman's dress, and on the ground a large, broken kettle.

Only when the customary questions were put about the name, social status, and previous convictions of the accused, did it appear that these were not persons but the two lifeless objects already mentioned. When the kettle was to be interrogated, the representative of the accused pushed it a little nearer the judge's seat with her foot. The kettle creaked and groaned, and the first comic effect was secured. The answers to the judge's questions were given in an altered, whining voice, with moans and wails.

The cross-examination elicited both the story of the two accused and their guilt, for which they were cited before a proletarian court. The dress, as the first to be prosecuted, told its life story in detail, from the counter to its employment as lining for a *khalat* worn by a dirty owner, who gave it to a woman after wearing it for a short time. "At first I was well content and caressed my mistress's body, for she looked very pretty in me and wore me only on holidays. But my happiness soon came to an end; I was worn every day and never washed, till I was transformed to the mass of filthy rags that you now see before you. I could die of shame, for I am so covered with dirt, dung, and sand that I weigh several pounds, and I must confess, to my shame, that my folds are swarming with lice and fleas. You laugh, Citizen Judge, but I weep and beg fervently for mercy, for it is not my fault. It is all the fault of my mistress, dirty Suley. She wiped her nose with my hem, and used me to dry pots and cups, her wet hands, and her child's feet and body. She let me get wet in the rain and spilt milk over me, and you would never believe how she has treated me, till at last I have become a foul rag that no decent woman would use as a mat before her door. But my mistress is a bad, lazy woman; she has

no idea of cleanliness, and she would still be wearing me if they had not arrested me during the last cultural attack and brought me here."

The kettle told a like story, and also put the blame on its mistress, Aisha.

As public prosecutor, I then made a flaming speech, enumerated all the dangers involved in a dirty dress and uncleaned kettle for the people's health, and demanded severe sentences—the dress should be burnt and the kettle broken to pieces. The public was fully in sympathy.

After the speech of the defending counsel, who pleaded for mercy, the court withdrew to consult, and the sentence was read in perfect silence, condemning the accused to the maximum penalty, but afterwards commuting it to lifelong segregation in view of the extenuating circumstances and the proletarian origin of the accused.

After the sentence had been pronounced, I immediately quitted the public prosecutor's place and made a speech to the audience, pointing the moral of the trial and especially calling attention to the evils caused by such violation of hygienic rules.

The whole proceedings made a tremendous impression on the audience. People talked of it, and joked and laughed, in the *auls* for a long time.

Of course the European types and means of propaganda were made use of in the East, wireless, theatre, and cinema, in addition to these special methods, conditioned by local circumstances and national character.

Of the WIRELESS it is perhaps enough to say that the broadcasts are held in seventy different languages in the Soviet Union from more than thirty stations, and chiefly in the languages of the East; and propaganda among women plays an important part. The same is true of the THEATRE and the CINEMA. One of the best-known WOMEN'S FILMS, *Ssevil* (a woman's name, meaning Be-beloved), taken from a drama of the same title and produced in the cinema studios of Baku, was given in all the national territories for years with great success. The heroine, a strong, indomitable character, such as we find much more frequently among the women of the East than elsewhere, breaks away from the veil and

the slavish existence of a Turkish woman in Azerbaijan after prolonged struggles; she leaves her husband's house and finally becomes an airwoman; indeed, the whole film was dedicated to Azerbaijan's first airwoman, Leila Mahmedbekova, whose life it partly depicts.

I saw a film with a similar plot in Samarqand, showing the sufferings of a second wife. All the actresses played in *paranjas*, and the happy ending was stressed by all the women laying aside their veils. Now, indeed, when the women of the East, even those who still wear the veil, know how the times have changed, this type of film is already more or less out of date. In recent years a special success has been the film entitled *The Three Songs about Lenin*, showing a series of scenes and types in all parts of the Soviet East on the occasion of Lenin's death, apparently loosely connected, but in reality forming an artistic unity; they show not only what he did for the "once blind women," whose faces were "confined in black prisons," but in general for all who "dragged out their lives without light, without knowledge." For he knew very well that "a million weaklings constitute a great force, just as a million grains of sand produce a sandheap"; and "wherever he found darkness he created light, even in the desert. . . ."

Our study of the various forms of propaganda in the Soviet East leads thus to a question that has been of the utmost importance to the national life of the minority peoples in the Union and has served, in a sense, as a test of the effective force of all these activities: the question, that is, of the unveiling of women.

AWAY WITH THE VEIL!

"It is the veil that makes woman something between man and beast," declares one of the innumerable pamphlets that have been issued against the veiling of woman in the Soviet East since the October Revolution. The campaign against this ancient Mohammedan custom

was started on all fronts and with all the methods of propaganda.

For once the Soviets, for reasons easily understood, had resolved to range the women of the East as full and equal members of the community, in the march of cultural, political, and economic development, they had first to free them from the traditions of many centuries which raised an impenetrable wall between them and the outer world. But the chief of these traditions, besides segregation, was the veil which, as I have said, was not universal among the Mohammedan population of the Russian East, but which assumed, in the *paranja* and the *chachvan* peculiarly crude and unhealthy forms. In Uzbekistan, especially, the women's lives were literally robbed of sunshine and light from the cradle to the grave.

To the Islamic mind the veil was a means, as we know, of enforcing virtue in women, who were naturally unchaste. But for the champions of women's freedom the veil had a double significance: it was both an instrument and a symbol of subjection. And this double significance of the veil explains the vehemence of the struggle for its abolition and the bloody forms which it sometimes assumed.

Hardly any arguments were left untouched in the agitation against the veil. The principal, indeed, was that of its effect upon health. At a district conference in Tashkent in 1922, where the agenda included the protection of motherhood and childhood, the injury to health was fully stated and proclaimed in a solemn resolution. It was said that the child's breathing was impeded under the veil. The *chachvan* absorbed the ultra-violet rays of the sun and encouraged rickets. Statistical inquiries conducted by Soviet doctors showed that trachoma and glaucoma were caused by the *paranja* and *chachvan*. A doctor who examined the blood components of fifty Uzbek women observed the disastrous results of wearing the veil.

A further principal argument used in propaganda was addressed to the religious sentiments of the Eastern peoples and sought to prove that the entire custom of wearing the veil was unknown to the original teaching of Mohammed, the *Koran*, and had been introduced in imitation of Persia, and only by means of peculiarly hairsplitting casuistry. In proof of this it was pointed out that the custom was found only among settled city dwellers, and that it had never been adopted by the Tatar, Bashkir, Kirghiz, Kazakh, and Turkman women, though the kerchief worn by these women was often only a variety of veil.

Of course general slogans and watchwords were cited, references to the human dignity of women, and to the necessity of freeing them and letting them play their part in the great revolution in people's lives that the new social order was producing. So, too, the poets of the awakening Soviet East took possession of the hotly debated question:

AWAY WITH THE VEIL

A tempest tears
The sombre clouds
Of th'accursed *chachvan*
Lift up your eyes!

Blind, crazy Error's
Curtain's rent;
O'er thrown the law
Of the dead past.

In mouldering huts,
Cramped and low-roofed,
In boggy fields,
The dawn is red.

Lo! in the East
From burning eyes
Of million souls
Flashes *one* will.

The shameful laws
Of the dead past
For aeons cast
A net o'er you.

Ye brown-skinned women
Haste to work;
Unveiled, ye weave
The dawn's red glow.

It was only to be expected that the Mohammedan divines, whose influence upon the women of Central Asia and the Islamic Caucasus was, of course, still immense, would not submit to defeat without offering resistance. They knew only too well what was at stake, knew that the new régime attacked the veil as a symbol, and that once Eastern women were unveiled, they would soon find their way into the open, into the factories, co-operatives, and *kolkhoses*, perhaps even into politics. And so the Mohammedan clergy organized a cunning and not altogether unsuccessful counter-campaign, tactically of interest because its methods were often copied from the enemy. It really seems as if Islam in Central Asia is beginning to modernize itself with lightning speed.

In a decree issued by the newly established Women's Section of the "Central Religious Administration of the Mohammedans of Central Asia" in Ufa, the directress, a *kadi*, gave advice a short time ago on the subject of divorce "based upon many years of experience," and even altered certain commandments of the *Shariat*. And altogether the so-called Progressives among the Mohammedan divines of Central Asia are now trying to make laws adapted to the new conditions. They use the phraseology of the Left, themselves promise liberation to the women, and are often successful even with politically active women, which gives rise to considerable lamentation in Soviet circles.

The *mullahs* proceed very cunningly. They do not

come forward personally but generally send their wives to the women, and try to frighten the apostates who adhere to enemy slogans with threats of all the penalties that Allah can impose. Earthquakes, famines, and plagues of locusts are associated with the activities of the Soviets; but the most vehement agitation is against the entry of women into industry and their unveiling, although the Progressives show themselves more conciliatory in these matters too.

Thus the slogan: "Away with the *paranja*!" first uttered in Tashkent in 1924, naturally appealed much more strongly to the women than the men. The agitation soon assumed the most vehement forms and swelled to a mass movement which swept Central Asia like a tempest. In Bukhara, where economic and social antagonisms during the Revolution led to particularly violent clashes, and where the anti-*paranja* tempest roused wild enthusiasm, the women, who had organized themselves in flying columns, demanded legal prohibition of the veil; they themselves took action and carried out regular *paranja* raids. Poor women tore the veils from the heads of the rich, whom the movement had hardly touched, in the open streets, forced their way into their houses during a wedding or any special festivity, collected the valuable *paranjas* in heaps, and either set fire to them in the inner courtyards, or altered them to clothing for the poor in sewing rooms specially established for the purpose.

Mrs. Aksentovich tells of these things too. In 1927 she had come to Bukhara with two other Russian women, in order to convince herself on the spot, after a visit shortly before, of the revolt of the native women:

After an interval of about one month and a half we found all the women in the streets of Bukhara unveiled, and we three, just come from the station, were the only ones who crept along a side street for a little still wearing our *paranjas*. It was not long before we were surrounded by flying women's column, who immediately subjected us to cross-examination: "I suppose you

come from Ferghana?" We did not answer. The question was repeated, and as we persisted in silence, the women began to grow more and more pressing and aggressive, till I, as the only one who could speak Tajik, declared to them that it was no affair of theirs, we did not choose to unveil, and, when the joke threatened to turn to something really serious, made myself known.

In no other town in Central Asia was the outbreak of elemental antagonistic forces so violent as in Bukhara, the heart of Islam and the Emir's capital, and thus the centre of the extremest degradation of women. Here the genuine *byt* revolution did, indeed, spring up spontaneously.

The campaign against the veil reached its height in Central Asia and Azerbaijan in the years of 1927 and 1928. With the slogan: "Down with the *chadra*!" "Down with the *paranja*!" the great offensive was opened on March 8th, International Women's Day, and the memorable battle fought which was called *Khudshum* (attack) in Uzbekistan, and is written in letters of flame in the history of women's liberation. Eye-witnesses have described it:

On that day, preparations for which had begun months before, tens of thousands of women, huddled in *paranjas* and *chachvans*, poured like a menacing avalanche through the narrow, crooked streets, squares, and bazaars of the ancient Central Asian cities—Samarqand, Bukhara, Tashkent, Khoqand, and others. But above this silent, gloomy, approaching mass, still without faces or eyes, a sea of red flags floated high in the air: an eloquent protest against the old and hated *byt*. And like a blossoming red flower-bed in the midst of a barren, weedy field, a group of women with uncovered faces and red kerchiefs on their heads contrasted with the strange procession; they marched past with more or less firm tread; these were the few who had previously had the courage to break with their past, and no longer to look upon the blue sky through a black grating.

Amidst strains of music the vast multitude, including a number of men and children, gathered round the Lenin monument, which was likewise decked with red banners and native carpets, and the

women waited breathlessly for what was to come. Then the great meeting began. Thundering, stinging words, but words, too that were new, unaccustomed, and inspiring, that moved the hearers' hearts so deeply that they called forth a real frenzy of enthusiasm and unceasing shouts of exultation. . . . And when the storm continued unabated, and all the bands struck up the *Internationale*, and the cries of *Yasha-ssun*—Hurrah!—rang across the ancient, tottering city walls and out into the desert, then the real proceedings began.

They were flung aloft into the quivering air, timidly at first, but then with ever wilder and more frenzied speed, these symbols of slavery that the women cast off, *paranjas*, *chachvans*, and *chadras*. They were piled in rapidly growing heaps, drenched with paraffin, and soon the dark clouds of smoke from the burning common abjuration of a thousand-year-old convention, now become unbearable, flared up into the bright sky of the spring day. . . . But at the sight of this unique pyre the women's souls flamed aloft; they were ready to drop for shame, fear, and joy, for here they were daring, for the first time since their childhood, to show their faces openly, to break the prison bars, even to ascend a platform, to follow the call of strangers. . . . Joyful excitement prevailed in the streets and clubs, in the factories and festal assemblies. The East was stirred to the depths of its being.

At that time the *Pravda Vostoka* reported from Ferg-hana:

The District Conference of Non-Party Women is just concluded, and it deserves special note that all the delegates, in spite of the presence of the men, took part in it without their *paranjas*, with faces uncovered. It began by Comrades Hakimbay Kassimov, Mali Yussupov, and Alim Khojayev bringing their wives and unveiling them before the whole assembly. That stirred the meeting to such enthusiasm that the whole hall was swept off its feet. Again and again *paranjas* were thrown on to the platform, and fifty-four delegates left the conference with uncovered faces. An Uzbek woman when she first appears in the street unveiled feels rather as a European would if she showed herself naked. Each single wondering glance hurts her; she walks with bowed head, she feels it strange and terrible and yet pleasant, and is occupied with one single care: What will they say to the "scandal" at home?

Every day the papers reported fresh "attacks on the *paranja* and the old *byt*" and that in all parts of Uzbekistan thousands of women were laying aside the veil. In Bukhara and the surrounding district alone ten thousand women cast off their veils—Bukhara where, as the local *kolkhos* women recently wrote to their colleagues in Ferghana, formerly all women had five masters at one and the same time: the Lord God, the Emir who regarded all Bukhara as his private property and the women as his slaves, their employer who disposed of land and water, the *mullah*, and their own husbands.

The next year, 1928, the offensive was repeated on March 8th. But afterwards the flood of enthusiasm ebbed a little. Many women who had unveiled on Women's Day resumed the veil afterwards, under pressure from relatives and from the counter-offensive which promptly set in, and many of them had to pay with their lives for the brief ecstasy. The number of those murdered in Uzbekistan alone in 1927, the year of the great offensive against the veil, is given as fourteen. Of the hundred thousand who unveiled in that same year, there are only five thousand who have not since resumed the veil. The falling-off is partly explained by the fact that a number of women thought they were only meant to unveil for the one festal day.

In spite of the reverse which partly wiped out the achievements of the great offensive against the veil in its earliest phase, the mass movement did not pass without leaving a trace. At the present day there is not a single veiled woman in Bukhara. Thousands of Uzbek women were awakened to a consciousness of their human dignity and gave vehement expression to their desire to learn. Schools were founded on a mass scale and attended by an unexpectedly large number of women. Women workers streamed to the factories, mostly arriving at the factory in *paranjas* and only uncovering their faces inside and veiling themselves again for their return home. The country girls organized in the *Koms-*

somol had thrown off the bonds of the veil once and for all and themselves took over the work of agitation with unabating zeal. And though you still meet unveiled women in the streets of the Central Asian towns with the timid, hesitating gait which shows that they find it difficult to accustom themselves to the sunlight that was shut off from them for so long, yet it is much commoner to see women whose whole demeanour has changed since they laid aside the *paranja* and who move about in the world with a quiet assurance that would formerly have been unthinkable, a world in which now they can appear as persons enjoying full and equal rights. But of course the past has not lost all its power by any means, and, except in Bukhara, the veil is still not wholly abolished in Central Asia and the Moham-medan Caucasus. And a woman doctor working among the Uzbeks expressed the opinion, when we discussed the subject, that it would be some time before all Uzbek women were unveiled. For an unveiled woman was still regarded as a bad character, and Central Asian women still want to marry and have children.

However true this may be, yet the falling-off after the *khudsum* is probably due far more to the men's lack of understanding and hostility.

People still tell in Tashkent how at first the men insulted unveiled women, and how it was said again and again: "Now we can do without Russian women; now we have our own prostitutes." (One of the first acts of the Revolution was to close the brothels, whose inmates, largely Russian women, were particularly popular.) It is less surprising that most of the *mullahs* in Central Asia represented unveiling as a sufficient reason for a woman to roast in hell to all eternity. But even native Communists often regarded an unveiled woman as fair game for their erotic lusts, and cases are reported in which these champions of women's freedom dragged unveiled women to their houses and violated them. Many of them made fiery speeches

about unveiling, but forbade their own wives to lay aside the *paranja*.

There is a resolution passed by the Central Executive Committee of Uzbekistan on March 7th, 1927, with the significant title "Protection of women who have laid aside the *paranja*":

"The women of Central Asia," it declares, "once slaves devoid of rights, have been made human beings and citizens of the Soviet Union. As the rights conceded to them become real and practical, the women of Uzbekistan are beginning more and more to play their part in political constructive work and the life of the community. Desiring to cast off the last remnants of their former slavish existence, they lay aside the *paranja*, as the chief hindrance to their participation in the national life. But the women who have unveiled are exposed to insults and ill-treatment, and are attacked by ill-disposed persons. In order to protect these women and to prevent violence against them, all officers of justice are hereby instructed to facilitate notification by these women of such insults, to prosecute on behalf of the state, and to conduct trials for assault on account of abandonment of the *paranja* out of their turn, as exemplary prosecutions."

There is constant reference in the minutes of proceedings to the duty of giving special assistance to unveiled women and admitting them to courses of instruction. Further than that the radicalism of the rulers could not well go. For, as I have said, many Uzbek women themselves demanded the compulsory abolition of the veil by law. But Moscow could not issue such a decree, because it was not desirable to rouse hostility to the régime in the national territories, and it was clear that such a measure would have stirred a large proportion of the backward Mussulman population to embittered resistance. And so the final abolition of the veil in the Soviet East was left to the passage of time, which is working for rapid progress and the liberation of women without any assistance from legislation.

In another similar question, on the other hand, a thoroughly radical course was adopted. It has always

been the custom for Kalmuck girls to be sewn into a laced bodice of thin leather, an instrument of torture known as the *kamsol*, from their eleventh or twelfth year till their bridal night; it checks the development of the breast glands, for in those parts women with fully developed breasts are regarded as ugly. But the consequences of this evil custom was that Kalmuck women could not suckle their first babies and often contracted lung disease.

Immediately after the Revolution the campaign against the *kamsol* was initiated, and carried on with great energy by the Red *Turtas*. In 1921 a Commission to Combat the *Kamsol* was set up, of which the author Amur Ssanan was a member. At Ssanan's instance the Commission was granted a hundred and fifty thousand metres of material to clothe twenty thousand Kalmuck girls. Designs were made for a new dress, of which a great number were made, and in May, 1921, there was an opportunity to distribute the new dresses at a Territorial Conference of Kalmuck women in Astrakhan. The distribution was made in a number of *aimaks* (villages) in a manner similar to the *khudsum*, the attack on the veil, in Central Asia. Great meetings were held, at the end of which the men withdrew from the hall and the girls undressed and put on the new reformed garments. Then the cast-off *kamsols* were collected outside the place of meeting and solemnly burnt to the strains of the *Internationale*, just like the *paranjas*. "Of course it would have been cheaper and more practical not to burn the *kamsols*," writes Ssanan, "but to alter them, yet it was just the burning that made a lasting impression on the Kalmuck women, young and old, who felt that their old prejudices were burnt together with the *kamsols*." Simultaneously a decree was issued, forbidding the wearing of the *kamsol* throughout the territory of the Kalmuck Republic.

A similar campaign was initiated and carried to a most successful conclusion in the Mohammedan *auls*

of the Caucasus. By ancient custom, that is the *Adat*, the women there, as we know, had no claim to warm outside garments. This barbarous custom goes far to explain the great mortality among women; in the Kabard-Balkar Republic, for instance, the percentage was sometimes 86 women to 100 deaths, and in Karachai 80. The campaign instituted by the authorities, CLOAKS FOR THE MOUNTAINEER WOMEN, met with a tremendous response, and its success finds expression in the result at which the propaganda aimed, the increasing participation of the mountaineer women in all Soviet elections. This campaign, initiated in 1928, continued for two years, and not only combated an evil custom that was as silly as it was injurious to health, but saw to it that the co-operative shops at Rostov on the Don offered a large number of cloaks at low prices, and even made presents of some to the mountaineer women. The propaganda used all the arts of persuasion, of which this manifesto is an example:

Comrades, workers, set a good example, dress your wives, daughters, and sisters warmly and urge mountaineer workers to combat the out-of-date custom of wearing no cloak with all their might. Call upon the mountaineer women to break away vigorously from the custom. May the warm cloak stand for the first decisive step in the struggle on behalf of mountaineer women against ancient prejudices, the first step towards their liberation.

THE REVOLT OF THE WOMEN—THE RESISTANCE OF THE MEN

The forms of propaganda hitherto described, and its aims, which for the most part involved a fundamental revolution of the whole way of life in the East, petrified as it had been for centuries, inevitably made the liberation of women appear in some cases like a definite revolt of the oppressed women against their male oppressors. In all the towns and villages of Central Asia the *Shenordyel*, the Women's Section, served for a long time as

a place of refuge for women who had risen in revolt against the power of an enslaving past or had offended against its cruel laws. In particular the *Shenotdyel* became a sanctuary for girls who were to be forced into marriage or sold, often at quite a tender age, and for wives who had hitherto been compelled to bear their husbands' tyranny in silence, and who now reflected that the new order had given them equal rights and the privilege of complaint.

There is no end to the cases affected by this revolt of the women in the Soviet East. Again and again we hear of girls who were to be forced into marriage with old men, and of women wounded and beaten, who came to the *Shenotdyel* for help, and of heads of the Women's Section taking vigorous action on behalf of a woman wronged by her parents or her husband.

Let me recount such a case from the records of the "Central House for Turkmenia"; a seventeen-year-old inmate of the *aul* of Ganjik was the wife of the old Rejeb, who had bought her from her uncle for a few camels and silver ornaments. Rejeb had besides her another wife and five grown-up daughters. The husband and the whole family ill-treated the young wife, forced her to work beyond her strength, and hardly gave her anything to eat. One day she was hanged head-downwards from the roof of the *kibitka* and beaten till the blood flowed, tortured with red-hot irons, and her hair torn out. She lived in the darkest and dirtiest corner of the hut, and ate and slept on a heap of ashes. She succeeded in fleeing to the House of the Woman *Dekhkan*. When she reached it her hair was all matted and swarming with vermin. For more than an hour she was bathed with hot water. Before the bath she had looked like an aged woman, so that she caused some surprise when she turned out to be a young girl. During the first few days she cried for joy, took a childlike delight in everything that she saw, followed the head of the house everywhere like a little dog, and begged them to keep

her there for ever so that she might learn something in the town and get on.

Women thus ill-treated by their husbands often proved and still prove to be active assistants of the Soviet Press, more especially, of course, when they are Party members. For instance, here is an article entitled "A Komssomolka under the Thumb of her autocratic Husband" from the journal called *The Komssomolet of the East*; it tells how for the first time the *Komssomol* in the town of Khoqand is under the leadership of a young Uzbek woman, Chinikhan Mukhametdiyev:

Chinikhan, strict and energetic, performs her task well. But her husband, Shirkhan Mukhametdiyev, although he is a member of the Party and chairman of the District Association for Enlightenment, does not seem to be pleased. "All the other responsible workers have their wives at home; my wife is the only one in Uzbekistan who must work and is entrusted with the leadership of the *Komssomol*. Just leave it alone and stay at home. Or do I give you too little money?" So the jealous husband was constantly talking. Shirkhan Mukhametdiyev, as we see, thinks that his wife is his private property, in fact a piece of bedroom furniture. In order to keep her at home, he makes backstairs attacks on the liberation of women.

At the end of 1925 Khayer Nissa, a girl of twelve and leader of the first Pioneer Section in Tashkent, came to the Women's Club in great excitement. She said that her father had ordered her to put on *paranja* and *chachvan* and prepare herself for marriage with a man who was a stranger to her. She had said she would neither marry nor put on a *paranja*, she was a Pioneer and wanted to learn. Her father then beat her for disobedience and shut her up. Nevertheless, she had managed to escape and seek protection in the club. The Women's Section espoused the girl's cause and made it possible for her to continue her studies. In December of the same year, on the day of the declaration of the new form of government in Uzbekistan, she was included as a Pioneer in a delegation which

welcomed the Government in the people's name. "Here we are, thousands and thousands of young girls," said the intelligent young creature in her address, "who want to begin a new life. We have had enough of having our faces covered with the *chachvan*, which cuts us off from the world, of being imprisoned in stuffy *ichkaris*, sold at the tenderest age to old men, maimed in body and soul, and degraded to slaves."

In the *aul* of Geokcha in the Merv district a woman was kept prisoner in chains in a cellar by her father-in-law, a *bey*, because she was disobedient. Every night the neighbours heard her cries, but nobody dared to go to her relief, for they feared the powerful *bey*. When the woman President of the village Soviet heard of the case, she herself came and freed the prisoner, who has since worked in the village Soviet.

A woman in the mountains of the Northern Caucasus was with child by a man whom she had loved before her marriage, but whom her parents had prevented her from marrying. Fearing to be punished with death, she said that she had been violated, and went to her parents to seek protection, but was driven away by them, and the villagers wanted to stone her, according to the ancient custom. The President of the village Soviet heard about it and hurried to prevent lynch law. The village Soviet met at once and charged the *Shenotdyel* to save the woman. They summoned a meeting that very day, at which fully three hundred villagers were present. Everybody expected that the woman would be handed over to the people for punishment. But instead they were told that she was innocent, and her husband alone guilty, for he had bought her against her will. In spite of this the crowd made to stone the adulteress, so her parents were fetched from the *aul*, and, when they had declared their willingness to take their daughter back, she was handed over to them. But first they were required to give a written undertaking to provide for the safety of the "adulteress,"

and it was further announced that, if a hair of her head were touched, the whole village would be held responsible.

As was only to be expected, the fascinating theme of the youthful woman rebel against the shameful heritage of long past days who fights the bitter struggle through to a victorious end has captured the literature of the national states. Here is the story of Gul Bibi, told by the writer *Asisi*, and based upon actual events:

"Ho, Jan Dughanah! o'er field and o'er bush the cry runs,
To-morrow brings promise to thee of three sons.
One will be clever and one will be good,
And the third a brave hero of Kashgar blood.

The voices rang silver-clear in Gul Bibi's ear, as she sat at her embroidery in the inner courtyard. The girl raised her head and listened. The song sounded from above. She put away her work in the bag, hastened up the stairs, and looked about her upon the roof. Her friends were singing and dancing there.

"Ssabo," she said to the eldest, "what game is that? In whose honour are you singing?"

"In yours. Who else should it be? In honour of the little bride who no longer plays with us since her engagement, and never raises her head from her work for days. Ah, Gul Bibi, if at least your bridegroom were worth it all . . ."

With that Ssabokhat turned away and went on singing with her companions:

"We forty maidens pick ourselves
Flowers in a fresh green meadow.
We stoop adown and bend ourselves,
And with red tulips deck ourselves,"

Ssabokhat was a merry, spirited little creature. Her father was a cobbler, and had no sons to help him in his work, so she had often to run messages for him.

A *paranja* had long been ready for Ssabo, but she still ran about in the street in her little *khalat* alone. Her parents looked the other way, which is easy to understand, for thus the *paranja* would last longer, and it is not so simple for a poor man to buy a new one.

Wherever anything was happening, the inquisitive Ssabokhat was sure to be there; wherever people gathered together and discussed anything, Ssabokhat was never missing. She listened attentively and noticed everything. In intercourse with others she was brusque and frank and outspoken, so that her playmates called her "Sharp-tongue."

Although she was a year younger than Gul Bibi, who was seventeen, she was more experienced and plucky than her friend. Gul Bibi's family were hardly richer than their neighbours, but they lived quite differently. Ever since she was a child, her mother had kept Gul Bibi within the four walls, and forbade her to go out into the street or to the bazaar. During the past year, since she had been engaged, Gul Bibi had seen nothing of the world but her house in the winter, and in the summer her garden outside the town.

And her whole character was quite different from that of the saucy Ssabokhat. Among her playmates she was silent and seldom laughed, and when she was out of humour she did not show it. Her mother and her playmates called her "Still Water."

Her friend Ssabokhat knew her better than all the rest. Her sharp eyes had long discerned that the "happy bride" was not nearly as happy as she should be.

After washing her own and her friend's hair with dexterous fingers, she began to plait Gul Bibi's glossy, black locks, and tried, meanwhile, to raise her spirits with chatter and jokes.

"Just look, my dear, I have made you something like forty plaits already. Two days more and the fragrant sheaf will fall into the arms of your newly married husband. Lucky fellow, that husband! The moon is bright for him, a full moon. If only I could marry you, instead of him—what? Come, don't look so gloomy, the day after to-morrow your dearest love is coming to fetch you. . . ."

But however much she chattered, however hard she tried, Ssabokhat could not cheer her friend.

Suddenly the clash of a *karnai* and the ringing of camels' bells sounded from the street. Ssabokhat rushed to the gate. After she had gazed her fill at the noisy preparations for the wedding, she hastened back to Gul Bibi and found that she had turned to the wall, her head buried in her *khalat*.

"What is the matter, Jan Dughanah?" asked Ssabokhat, shaking her friend. "You should just see what a magnificent *tui*

your bridegroom has prepared for you, such a wedding banquet as is not often seen. Two *karnais*, nine camels, and two of them laden with chests and blankets, and marvellous *sussanehs* spread over them. The other camels are bringing flour and rice and onions and turnips under the flowery silk cloths that you have embroidered. It makes your mouth water to look at it. And then the sheep! Seven fat sheep . . . I call that something like a *tui*. I should be glad if I had only half as much. Who knows what starveling my old people will marry me to. If you like, I'll marry this rich old fellow, and welcome. . . ."

Still Gul Bibi did not raise her head, and her friend went on teasing her.

"Why do you talk so insincerely?" asked Gul Bibi at last. "Don't you remember what you said to me that day on the roof: 'Your bridegroom isn't worth making such lovely embroideries for'—that's what you said. And now you're all enthusiasm because the embroideries look so splendid on the camels. . . . Isn't that hypocrisy?"

Ssabokhat grew thoughtful. She put her arms round Gul Bibi's neck and said tenderly,

"Jan Dughanah, forgive me. I am sorry to say that what I said then is true. Your bridegroom is as ugly as a monkey. He has a pock-marked face and a flat nose. . . . But that would be no misfortune, if he were any good in other ways. But I tell you plainly, your bridegroom is no good. Your parents have allowed his wealth to blind them, and if it hadn't been for that they would have been glad to give you to Nourus, who would have suited you much better, because his father is a handicraft worker and you are peasants. But your father was determined to get a *bey*, and he did not like Nourus, because he is a *koms-somolets* and teaches the children unbelief at school. And now it seems your father is not satisfied either. Not long ago, when they hounded the *bey* out of an election meeting, I heard your father say: 'I fear, I fear that I was wrong to promise my daughter to that man.' Oh, Jan Dughanah, I often see Nourus. He's a nice boy, makes your mouth water! And you, so pretty and gentle, would be just the right wife for him. There, Dughanah, now I have told you the whole truth, and all my chatter before was only meant to comfort and encourage you."

Gul Bibi listened with bowed head. "Ssabo Jan," she began, "now that you have told me everything so frankly, I will tell

you my secret too. Last spring, when we moved to our garden, I was taking some things there on the *ishak*. I put my younger brother, Nemat Jan, on its back and walked beside it myself, driving it. Suddenly a demon on a two-wheeled devil's vehicle approached us and made something in his hand shiek. The *ishak* shied and backed, and my brother nearly fell off. I held the *ishak* and wanted to re-adjust the sacks, but I could not. And then a young man with a satchel came up to me and called after the cyclist: 'Hi, you fellow, you ought to be more on the lookout.' And then whilst we were re-arranging the things my *chachvan* fell from my face and he could see how flushed I was. He smiled quietly, and before we proceeded on our way, he asked me my own and my father's name. I told him my father's, but not my own. . . .

"I don't know how it is, but ever since then I always see the young man before me, and it was only later that I learned that he was that same Nourus of whom you speak. But the rough fellow who was the cause of it all is no other than my present bridegroom. That is why I am so sad." And Gul Bibi began to weep bitterly on her friend's shoulder.

Ssabokhat was deeply moved by Gul Bibi's story. "Why didn't you tell me before, Gul?" she said reproachfully. "Perhaps it would have been possible to free you sooner from that monster."

"Don't talk nonsense, Ssabo. What can one do in opposition to father and mother?"

"What a question! You're a silly baby, sitting at home without an idea of what is going on in the world. There's a new organization called the *Shenotdyel*. You only have to go there, and you can marry whom you like. Let my parents just try to give me to a man against my will—I'll show them! Shall I tell you, Dughanah? I, too, have found a teacher in the same school where Nourus teaches, and you see, one fine day I'll marry him. If you weren't such a coward you'd certainly have got your Nourus long ago."

"Ah, darling Ssabo Jan, you can say 'Turkish honey' as often as you like, but you won't have the sweet taste in your mouth."

"I know another proverb: The child that doesn't cry doesn't get the breast. Seriously, Gul Bibi, do you want me to stop the marriage?"

"But little sister, is it possible?" cried Gul Bibi, and flung her arms round her friend's neck.

Ssabokhat pressed Gul Bibi's hand resolutely. "I will do what I can, only don't be intimidated, and say what is necessary at the right moment. I know the woman delegate well, and I'm not afraid to go to the *Shenotdyel*, nor to Nourus. Perhaps the proverb will come true which says: When the rice-field is watered, the weeds get some too, and I shall meet my sweetheart there. Now I'm going."

She threw her *khalat* over her head and ran away.

Nourus was twenty-three and had passed his teacher's examination, and now he had been head of the elementary school for two years. His father, the weaver Latif, had long tried to get him married, but since Gul Bibi's father had rejected Nourus, he would hear nothing of other girls.

On March 6th Nourus dismissed the children from school earlier than usual and prepared to decorate the rooms for Women's Day on March 8th with another teacher and the women's delegate, Kholjan Bibi. He was just putting up a poster, when a strange girl peeped in at the crack of the door and, without any shyness, asked leave to enter, for she had something to say.

"Come in." Ssabo did so and immediately took a seat. Kholjan Bibi recognized her at once.

"Are you Ssabokhat? Well, are you determined to put away your *paranja* on March 8th?"

"I should think so!" replied Ssabo. At that moment she noticed the other teacher. All at once her heart began to thump, but she pretended not to recognize him, although he was the one about whom she had spoken to her friend. She pretended to be embarrassed and asked Nourus: "I can speak before Kholjan Bibi, of course, but can I before this man?"

"Speak without fear; he is a teacher in this school, like myself, and you can trust him."

"Good," said Ssabokhat, and added at once: "I come from Gul Bibi, Alima's daughter. To-day is the feast on the eve of her wedding, you know, the *tui*."

Nourus dropped the hammer and with one stride he stood beside Ssabokhat. "What else?" he asked.

"Gul Bibi told me to say, let the teacher free me from my bridegroom, the son of Saadi Puchuk, and, if he wishes it, I will marry him. Only he must do it in such a way that neither my parents nor those of the bridegroom make an uproar."

Nourus was speechless, and turned to the other two. Then he said: "Did you hear that?"

And now all three began to consult about what was to be done. At last Nourus said to Ssabokhat: "Sister, if Gul Bibi keeps to her resolution, it can all be managed easily. I and my colleague here and Kholjan Bibi will do all that we can. In two days it is the 8th of March, and then it will be quite simple to free Gul Bibi. Tell me, when is the wedding?"

"To-day is the *tui*, to-morrow the great rice banquet, the *plov*, so the wedding is the day after to-morrow."

"That will do very well, you see it is on Women's Day. Now, when she is taken to the *Sags* on that day to be registered, let me know, and we will all three turn up. If Gul Bibi says at the *Sags* that she won't marry the son of Saadi Puchuk, they won't register the marriage. She must not be afraid either of her own parents or of Saadi Puchuk. We have a Soviet Government now, and that is not for nothing; there is a law that gives every girl the right to marry according to her own free choice, and nobody may prevent her. Do you understand?"

"I'll tell Gul Bibi," Ssabo promised. "She will certainly do what I advise her. . . ."

"Agreed."

It seemed that everything was arranged, but Ssabokhat still lingered. It was a little time before she put on her *khalat*, went to the door, and turned again at the threshold. "Supposing my friend asks the name of the other teacher who is coming too, what am I to say to her?" "Tell her his name is Sharif Jon." "And if she should ask whether his wife still wears the *paranja* or is unveiled?" "Then you can tell her that he is still unmarried." "And if anyone were to ask whom and when he will marry?" "That you must ask Sharif himself."

Sharif, who had stood in silent admiration of the intelligent girl all the time, now appeared greatly delighted at the turn things had taken, and he said with a smile: "If you are absolutely determined to answer that question, you can tell your friend that Sharif will be married on the same day as Nourus."

Ssabokhat was speechless; she drew her *khalat* firmly over her head and shot out like an arrow.

It was Gul Bibi's wedding day. Alima's house was full of guests. The relatives and friends of Alima and Saadi Bey were

seated on two rows of benches before the door. When a white turban or a rich *khalat* was sighted in the distance, they all sprang to their feet, bowed deeply, laid their hands on their hearts, and cried aloud: "*Assalom ul aleikum*," "*Aleikum assalom*." Then the guest passed into the house, where gay coloured sweetmeats and pistachio nuts were spread out on a long table, where other large turbans and *khalats* shone, and the mosque servant filled the cups with green tea.

Muhammed Shikir Bey, a man of experience, who could never be dispensed with at weddings and funerals, led the guests in groups into the *takht-khana*, a specially appointed room with carpets and embroideries, where important personages put on new *khalats* and other presents were made. Great care was taken that no poorer guest went astray and got among the superior ones; that might annoy the magnificent turbans.

Alima and Saadi Bey, the hosts, received the guests at the door, bowed deeply, and accepted the new-comer's good wishes. The departing guests said, as they took leave: "*Ayayay*, what a splendid *tui* it was!" Both fathers nearly jumped out of their *khalats* for pride and joy at this; for that is what matters most at every *tui*.

But Saadi Puchuk seemed a little disturbed. He was perpetually craning his neck and looking out, but the bride and bridegroom, who had gone to the *Sags* to be registered, were still not to be seen.

"Alima Bey," he said, turning to Gul Bibi's father, "did you send trustworthy people to accompany your daughter?"

"You need not be uneasy," replied Alima, "it will be all right."

"I don't understand where they are all this time. . . . You know what times we live in; you can never be sure whether something will not happen."

"They will come all right. Perhaps the registrar happened not to be at the *Sags*."

The Imam Mustafa appeared at the door, wearing a new *khalat* that had just been presented to him. "*Ayay*," he said, grinning from ear to ear. "That really was a *tui* such as a Shah might have given. Nobody has given such a splendid feast for years. We only had *tuis* like that at your father's and grandfather's—Allah's peace be with them! God preserve your children from jealous eyes and give them long life in peace and honour,

and fine children as well. Please God, I may be at their *tui*, and eat plenty of *plou*, and put on a new *khalat*. *Allogu akbar!*"

"Nothing is too costly for you; and what worthier man could we clothe in our new *khalats* and offer our banquet? We are all your servants. I and Alma Bey and our children and children's children. . . ."

At this moment a man rushed in in such a state of excitement that his turban was almost falling off. He was the man who had accompanied the young couple to the *Sags*. They all stared at him in amazement. "Oh, the world is coming to an end!" he gasped breathlessly. "*Bey*, send your guests away, let everyone lay aside his *khalat*, a disaster has happened." "What disaster; tell us." Saadi Puchuk struck his forehead. At last the man in the tall turban pulled himself together and began to tell his story. "We went with the bride and meant to have her marriage registered. Then we suddenly saw women gathering from all directions, as if the earth had suddenly opened. They were all unveiled, not one of them wore a *paranja*. . . . We stood petrified with horror. Then someone said, it was that accursed Women's Day to-day. At last we got to the *Sags*, and there we found the place full of womenfolk. . . ."

"Don't be so garrulous. Tell us, have you got the certificate? Yes or no?" "Yes, we've got that. . . ." "Then what's all this palaver about?" broke in the Imam. "If the marriage lines are there, everything is all right; our wives are sitting at home, and we've eaten the rice; what's all this fuss about?"

"You don't know what you're saying, *Mullah*," shouted the man. "It's not marriage lines that we have got, but a death sentence. We led the bride and bridegroom to the registrar and said: 'This is Gul Bibi, Alima's daughter; she is marrying Mahdi Bey, Saadi Bey's son. Give us the certificate.' 'Very well,' said the official, arranged his papers, and asked: 'Mahdi Bey, you take Gul Bibi to wife?' 'Yes,' said he. 'And you, sister, take Mahdi Bey for your husband?' Your daughter maintained silence. At that moment the notorious Ssabokhat, the shameless daughter of your neighbour, ran up and cried: 'Why are you silent, Gul Bibi? Now you must speak, now is the time!' Then Gul Bibi said: 'I do not know this man; my father wants me to marry him, but I do not want to.' We were struck dumb, we stood and did not know what to do. But that impudent Ssabokhat would not hold her peace but kept on urging the

bride: 'Do speak, we must settle the matter.' And then Gul Bibi said: 'I want to marry the teacher Nourus; please register our marriage.' A little further off two teachers from our school were standing, and just think, the two devils approached, and one said: 'I will marry Gul Bibi.' And then the cursed wench tore off Gul Bibi's *paranja* and her own, gave her hand to the other teacher, and all the women standing round shouted: 'Long live free woman!' The official straightway registered the marriage of the two couples, everybody shouted Huriah! and they marched out into the street with music. It all happened so devilishly fast that we only recovered our wits when it was all over."

"Oh, the world is coming to an end!" groaned the *Mullah*, and would have dropped for indignation if the bringer of the news had not supported him, at the same time beginning to strip off the *khalat* that had been given to him.

On the roof the girls danced and sang:

"Ho, Jan Dughanah! o'er field and o'er bush the cry runs,
To-morrow brings promise to thee of three sons. . . ."

In very many cases, of course, there is no question of the individual revolt of a single woman against constraint and oppression, as with Gul Bibi. Often enough the revolt of the women in the Soviet East assumed the character of a real mass movement. The details of these movements are illustrated by an example from Turkmenia in 1927. The village Soviet was to be elected in an *aul* in the Ata Tejen district. A woman's meeting was summoned and about two dozen appeared. The chairman made an introductory speech and invited the audience to ask questions. Gradually the women summoned up courage and began to speak, although many of them had never before quitted their smoky *kibitkas*. And so the discussion grew noisier, again and again it was urged that, when land and water were distributed, nobody must be overlooked; then one woman spoke with special energy and said: "The Soviets have been several years in power, but they still concern themselves far too little about us women. We still get no land. Why not?" And she approached

the chairman with a menacing gesture. Without outside suggestion, the meeting then passed a very vigorous resolution, repeating the demand; "When water and land are distributed, the women must in no case be overlooked. Let the authorities not forget to give the women their due share." The assembled women were so enthusiastic and aggressive that they raised both hands again and again when they voted.

When in the same year three women in Katta Kurgan who had taken part in the *khudsum* and burnt their veils, were found murdered, seventy Uzbek women residents assembled and marched with red flags to the district Committee and demanded that the murderer should be surrendered to them. They shouted: "*We* unveil and the men kill us for it!" They threatened that, if the murderer was not delivered over to them, they would resume the veil, and were not pacified till the official explained to them that in the Soviet state there was no lynch law, but that the murderer would receive the punishment he deserved from the courts of justice.

A. Nukhrat tells the story of another women's revolt:

In a little *aul* in Turkmenia there was a Women's Club, but hardly anybody went to it; nobody even knew who was chairwoman. One day all that was transformed as if by magic, for it was decided to establish a *kolkhos* in which a hundred and twenty farms united. As usual, the men told their wives nothing about the matter. The first that the wives heard of it was in the tale of a gossiping old woman who tried to persuade them that their husbands were going to enter a commune and become "*giaours*"; and there was an immense blanket, fifty yards long, under which all the members of the commune were to sleep, men and women promiscuously; it was already being woven, and each man would have a fresh woman allotted to him every night. On her way from one farm to another the old woman invented fresh details, and told how the children would be taken away from the women and sent to the North, where they would be given pork to eat. A wave of feverish excitement swept over the women of the *aul*. Before long the whole *aul* was seething. The women ran in

despair and confusion from one *kibitka* to another, beat their breasts, wailed, and scolded, as if some terrible disaster had happened.

Some three hundred women marched to the house of the village Soviet, led by the old gossip, and demanded vehemently that the *kolkhos* should not be established. The officials who tried to pacify the multitude, were pelted with stones and dung. "We don't need a *kolkhos*," stormed the women, "and we won't give up our children, and we will have nothing to do with the Soviet Government that tramples our laws underfoot."

The officials were obliged to withdraw, but then a poor villager stepped forward, called upon his mother and wife by name, and declared: "You know me, and my people can support me when I say that I am no liar; you have been deceived; nobody is plotting against you or your children. We have erred; we have forgotten the words of Babay Lenin that there are two voices in the Soviet state, a male and a female. We failed to ask the women whether they agreed to the establishment of a *kolkhos*; but now go home quietly, and I can promise you, if the women don't want it, there will be no *kolkhos* in our village." The man's action succeeded. First the speaker's family went home, and then gradually the other women dispersed, and the chairwoman of the Club was reproached for not having explained the position to the women.

Shortly afterwards an able new chairwoman came from the town and set to work with a will. She calmed the women, won their goodwill for the intended *kolkhos*, and soon reached the point when the old gossip's stories were laughed out of court by all the women, and they themselves pressed for the rapid establishment of the *kolkhos*.

Finally, let me add a literary description of a women's revolt in which the plucky Uzbek women secured for themselves a Red *Chaikhana* or tea-room:

The day of the bazaar—that is the hardest day in the *kishlak*.

It is only then that you discover what the *kishlak* really lives on, how many inhabitants it has, and in what their wealth or poverty consists. . . .

The inhabitants of six distant *auls* meet on the great paved road, crowded all the way to the bazaar with the hot, steaming flocks of sheep, the softly trotting camels, and the Kirghiz horses with

their sharply beating hoofs. All the world is streaming to the bazaar.

On cold days everyone makes haste to sell his wares and go to the *chaikhana*, there either to drown his troubles in a *piala* of green tea or express his joy in eager talk. Only the women who come to the bazaar are in no hurry. A *chaikhana* is not for women, and they remain long seated beside the wares that they have brought.

Here the *tyubetyeikas*, the *iraks*, and the *susannehs* glow in all the colours of the rainbow, and there are besides new laid eggs in round baskets, and milk and butter, slightly frozen, in pails.

Mastura Khan is like a living grey ball; she slides in a squatting position from one woman to another. She does not sell her wares, but only exchanges the news of the big town for that of the *kishlak*.

The women have come from all imaginable distant *auls*. In every *aul* the people have their own troubles. But when, on the day of the bazaar, the *auls* meet on the great paved road, then their sorrows and joys travel side by side with the wares they are carrying. . . .

Pleasant talk warms the cockles of the heart, but it does not make time stand still, and the cold evening draws near like a shadow. To-day the bazaar has had a bad, unsuccessful day. When it is cold the inhabitants of the *kishlak* prefer to remain at home. The flowers on the *tyubetyeikas* are white with frost, the milk in the pails is frozen hard. On a day like that one is in no hurry to go home. At home the people expect something new from the bazaar, but there is nothing, instead only frost-bitten feet and ruined wares.

"It would be nice to drink a cup of hot tea and rest a little," said Assali from Duss *aul*, when the women moved in a crowd towards the Red *chaikhana*. You could even see through the frozen window-panes how gay and warm and sociable it was inside. And Assali's briefly hinted wish met with an immediate response in all the women's hearts.

"Mastura Khan, oh Mastura Aksakal, what do you think? There are many of us here. Let them allow us a little rest for once. They sit in there for hours, on market days and week-days, but *we* should like to get a little warm, and rest for once. . . ."

Repeating these words, Mastura Khan now pushed open the low door of the *chaikhana*. She shouted so loud that all the men turned their faces, sweating with laughter and tea, towards her. "Did you hear? The women want to come into the *chaikhana* !

That really is the latest! Mastura will soon be getting men's breeches for all our wives. Ha-ha-ha. . . ."

The men laughed till their sides ached.

But it was not to surrender at once that Mastura had become *Aksakal*, that is, appointed to the office of village Elder, Grey-beard. Nor had it escaped her sharp eyes that the youthful secretary had hurriedly hidden behind her broad back.

"Hi, Urtak Mamayev, that is how you come to the assistance of your fellow villagers? That is how you stand up for them when anyone does them an injury?"

"Oh, but, Mastura Khan, who is doing you an injury? Have you ever known women sitting in a *chaikhana*, that is meant for men?"

"Have I ever known it? Listen, you ass, have you ever known women trading alone in the bazaar, wearing no *chachvans*, going to school? All that was unknown formerly, all that has only just come about, and there is plenty more to come. This is a new *kyl chaikhana*, a Red *Chaikhana*, and nobody has said that it is only for men. . . ."

Mastura's eyes rolled like the ripe grains of Uryuk, and gleamed angrily at the men present. You cannot hide from such eyes, and there is no answering them. But how can one abandon another *piala* of tea and a further hour and a half of warmth and gaiety, and own oneself beaten?

Mirsa, the manager of the *chaikhana*, saved the situation:

"*Urtaklyar, oi Urtaklyar*, hasten home, comrades, to feed the children and prepare supper. Else it will be a bad look-out for you when your wives come back."

One by one the men left the *chaikhana* in silence.

"Sit down to the *samovar*, Mastura; you are manageress of the *chaikhana* now; pour out tea for the guests."

And Mastura sat down to the big, merrily humming *samovar* and poured out tea for the guests. But Mastura's guests laid their upper garments in a corner, warmed their frozen feet at the hearth, gathered delighted by the wall with the big, coloured posters, and fetched books and newspapers from the table. . . .

The big, yellow *samovar* had never known such unusual guests in all its life, and it snorted and puffed out its brass body.

But every one of the women took home Mastura's heartening promise:

"By the next bazaar we will have our own *chaikhana*."

The women's revolt did not always proceed so merrily or end so satisfactorily to all as in the case of the Uzbek women's storming of the Red *Chaikhana*. A terrible counter-offensive began, calling for many victims, and led, as a rule, by Mussulman divines, side by side with *beys* concerned for their power and wealth. There are still traces of the agitation of the divines, in particular among the ignorant women of Central Asia. Thus it seems to be simply impossible to kill the rumour, which they zealously spread for years, that in the *kolkhoses* and *soukhoses* women are held in common, and that men and women sleep promiscuously under one enormous blanket. In many places the *mullahs* and *beys* organized regular revolts and boycotts against the crèches and the inoculation against smallpox and scarlet fever, among the women susceptible to their influence. Again and again they were told that in the crèches the babies were brought up by hand and then sent either to Russia or China, where they were boiled down to soap or eaten. People believed all these rumours, and in many places the newly established crèches remained empty for years.

In many cases the population, incited by the *mullahs*, themselves stood up for the good old customs. In one *aul* in Daghestan a girl gave birth to a child after the Soviets had assumed power, and the people held that it was illegitimate. The girl, with her baby in her arms, was led to a bridge and stoned. She fell dead into the water. But nothing was done to the child's father.

And there were other bloody deeds. There were cases in Central Asia of the murder of the husbands of politically active women, simply in order to accuse the women of the crime afterwards. Far more often, indeed, the women themselves were the victims. I have already hinted what a terribly large number of Eastern women in the Union had to pay for their freedom with their lives. In Central Asia alone it is estimated at four hundred, and these were mainly women who were the first to be captured by the Communist propaganda,

the first to find their way into the factories and organizations, or to lay aside the hated veil.

The men's resistance was weakest among the Kirghizes, the people of the Tsarina of Alai, of whom I have already told and whose memory is still fresh. Here no women were murdered. But the murders were the more numerous in Turkmenia, which has, indeed, always enjoyed the reputation of being inhabited by the most tyrannical and jealous men in all Central Asia. Here the number of murdered women is estimated at about a hundred, and, unhappily, there is every reason to expect that it will be further increased; not long ago a woman was murdered in Merv who had opposed the *beys*. And in 1926 thirty women, for the most part unveiled, were killed in three districts of that country alone. But the worst feature of the affair was that the courts of justice were in no hurry to call the murderers to account.

The other states of the Soviet East kept pace with Turkmenia and, as is almost inevitable, occasional excesses occur in the movement for women's emancipation. Even as late as March, 1934, a woman was murdered near Bukhara. She had been reproached in the *kolkhos* for living with an idler, whereupon she told her husband that she was ashamed of him and that, if he continued to refuse to work, she would resort to the right of divorce that the law gave her. In the following night the husband cut her throat. Since then the *kolkhos* in which she worked is called after her Davrinoy *Kolkhos*.

There are hundreds of similar cases, though they did not all end in murder. The photographs relating to murders and mutilation in various museums of Central Asia constitute a special and horrible collection. For the most part they are atrocities caused by a patriarchy with its back to the wall, committed by "younger gods" against women who were beginning to work in *kolkhoses* and *sovkhoses*.

In Ashqabad a Turkman murdered his wife in the public street because she wanted to become a midwife

and was studying at the Technical School. When her friends called for help and a militiaman hastened to the rescue, the murderer said to him in a tone of indifference: "That is a private affair between man and wife and does not concern any outsider."

In an *aul* near Ashqabad a Turkman woman of twenty-four, famed for her beauty, was murdered because she appealed to the court against being bequeathed by her dead husband to his fourteen-year-old brother. Her old mother, before whose eyes the murder was perpetrated, was driven mad. She is still living in her *aul*, a human wreck, and the only words that her lips can formulate are: "Blood for blood. . . ."

The terror raged against liberated women most violently in the years in which the agitation against the veil reached its zenith. When, in 1927, a great earthquake laid waste the Ferghana Valley, the "Pearl of Uzbekistan," the *beys* and *mullahs* declared that it was all a punishment from Allah for the unveiling of women. And in actual fact the majority of women who had already laid aside the *paranja* resumed the veil. In the same way drought and water shortage were represented as punishments sent by Heaven, and the men often held great festivals on the occasion of their wives resuming the veil. During the great *khudshum* fifty-one women were murdered in the Samarqand and Khorasan districts alone, many of them with brutal, almost sadistic, torture. Not a few of them were flung into the *aryks* or drains, and sometimes men were killed at the same time because they had agreed to the unveiling of their wives.

Frequently the victims of the counter-offensive were women of standing, officials, who are still highly honoured in the East as pioneers of the liberation of their sex, whose fame still lives in the people's memory and wins new support. One of them was the foundress of the "House of the Woman *Dekhkan*" (Peasant) in Ashqabad, *Enne Kuliyeva* by name. Another, the Vice-chairman of the Executive Committee of the Federal Republic

of Turkmenia, *Temriyeva*, was actually killed in April, 1934, by a murderer who has not yet been traced. She was on the eve of a journey in her official capacity, and the evening before she received a visit from her husband, from whom she had been separated for seven years and on whom, of course, suspicion fell. Nevertheless, it could not be proved that it was he who had committed the murder. Shortly afterwards her sister, too, was murdered in Merv.

The best known of the Central Asiatic women who fell victims to the fury of the counter-offensive is the Turkman *Anna Jamal*. I will let *M. Tikhonov* tell her story, the Russian author who travelled through the country with a "shock brigade" of writers:

Anna Jamal, an inhabitant of the *aul* of Yangalak, did as all Turkman women do, she worked to the point of exhaustion, grinding corn with a stone handmill, spinning and weaving, striking the *yurta* and pitching it again, fetching water, and labouring in the fields. Her mouth was covered with the everlasting cloth, for as a well-behaved woman she had only to keep silence and work; the heavy, tall hat weighed on her head, and her clumsy garment disfigured her shape. She walked through life like a ghost.

She saw how girls of nine were married; how girls of seven, instead of playing with dolls, bent over their looms like slaves, or learned to finish felt, and how their little fingers were scratched, by the rough wool till they bled. The same destiny awaited her children.

It was in the early days of the Soviet Government, when it was necessary to induce old Turkman women with the gift of five roubles to become members of an *aul* Soviet. And even of these old women, only three could be got together, so hard was it for Turkman women to find their bearings in the new Soviet conditions, and so suspicious were they of anything new, expecting no good to come of it.

For many days and nights Anna Jamal brooded over the endless darkness that shut in her and her countrywomen on all sides, and that people called life. After long cogitation she went to the town.

. . . And now, here was Anna Jamal, one of the first to

register as a member of the Party. She travelled from *aul* to *aul* and talked with the women as friend and agitator. Whence did she find all these words? Facts spoke for themselves, she had only to point them out: senseless clothing, handmills, dirty cradles, slavish cloths, heavy *omachis*, primitive ploughs. People in the *aul* began to mutter behind Anna Jamal's back, before them all she had turned away from the Faith, the *Adat*, had betrayed her people, and had gone to the town to the *Jinotdyel*, the Devil's Chancellory. The Devil possessed her herself; women, avoid her!

But the women would not avoid her. They came secretly to the *jurta* where she sat, and listened. Jamal spoke rapidly and confusedly, and yet it was all clear. She spoke just those words for which Turkman women had long waited. And yet she neither neglected her household nor her children. Her daily work did not suffer for her journeys and talking.

. . . Round the *jurta* lay the desert night. The moon rose. The broad expanse of sand shimmered in the white light. Old Pukhta Hanau heard the beat of horses' hoofs.

Little Kichi, Anna Jamal's daughter, woke up because a bucket was knocked over noisily. She opened her eyes and saw people enter the *jurta*, and heard the sound of the horses standing behind the door. One of the strangers had put out the night fire, and for a moment it was dark. The strangers walked round the *kibitka* and bent over the sleeping forms, seeking in the dark for a woman's head-dress. They could not find Jamal because, contrary to custom, she slept without a head covering. Then Kichi screamed in terrible fear, and so waked her mother.

"What has happened?" asked Jamal, and leapt up from her bed.

The side of the *jurta* blew back, the moon shone in, and one of the Turkmans seized the little girl by her shoulders, raised her, and cut the skin of her forehead with his dagger. The blood flowed into her eyes, and Kichi could no longer see what was happening. Kichi's little brother cried because the blood flowed into his eyes too, like his sister's.

The horsemen stabbed Anna Jamal with their daggers and rode away. The children lay till morning by their mother's body. Then the neighbours gathered from all sides, and the men set out on the tracks of the murderers.

The trampled grains of barley, dung, and hoof marks led from one well to another. Then they summoned a large number

of the tribe together and held a great council. . . . The murderers' relatives offered Jamal's husband gold and cattle and proposed that peace should be concluded. But Ak Mahmed looked at little Kichi, and she said: "Father, I know all of them who murdered Mother, and you, do you know them too?" And Ak Mahmed said wryly: "Yes," and refused to accept the proffered peace.

The murderers were brought to justice in Ashqabad and shot. And during the trial the whole town came to see the black night riders of the desert who had killed a rebellious woman. The murderers sat calmly, believing that they had done a great deed. But so many women came to Anna Jamal's funeral that the Turkmans in the *auls* were perplexed in spite of all. And when they heard the women's speeches beside her grave, many of them were ashamed. They went into the *yurtas* and left the women behind alone. And then the women wept, and when Anna Jamal was laid to rest a Turkman woman said: "Don't think that you have sacrificed your life in vain, Anna Jamal. There are many of us who will follow in your footsteps, and they cannot kill us all. . . ."

The daughter of this martyr of women's emancipation in Turkmenia is now studying at a university in Tashkent.

Later the practice was adopted of holding so-called EXEMPLARY TRIALS in all cases of the murder of women for political reasons. They are generally conducted at the place of the crime or in the Women's Club. The whole population from far and near is invited to be present at the proceedings, and anyone who has anything to say may speak. Leading women very often come forward. The best counsel is engaged, and these trials, which often last for weeks, exercise a lasting propagandist influence on the deeply moved spectators.

But in spite of all these victims of murder, the struggle does not relax. The women of the East continue to fight—and to give their lives—for their humanity.

SHE IS AWAKE!

And now, if we ask what the general outcome of this struggle is, the answer is almost self evident: Eastern

women really are awake. The tide of enlightenment has not reached all sections of the population equally; millions of women are still dragging on a life unworthy of human beings, but on the road on which they have once entered there is no turning back, and emancipation proceeds irresistibly in all spheres of economic, social, and cultural life. One thing only must not be forgotten, when we read or hear the childishly naive outbursts of delight at the change: namely, that it must not be gauged by Western European standards, and that even the most modest gain—the use of soap or washable underclothes, of a lamp or a bed, or the like—represents a tremendous event, something new and unique, in the lives of these primitive and impressionable folk.

It is the right of divorce that the enslaved women of the national territories in the Union have won most rapidly and most thoroughly. That is a proof that Mohammedan marriage, the classical institution of women's enslavement in the East, was tottering at its foundations. Regarded in this light it is easy to understand that, for instance, the first divorce demanded by a wife in Tajikistan was generally looked upon as a great event. But very soon the first rare cases were to be followed by a regular flood of divorces.

The statistics of the grounds of divorce are worthy of notice and in some cases extremely significant. In Adygeya (Cherkessia), where no less than thirty-five women demanded a divorce in the years 1924 and 1925, four gave the reason that their husbands were ne'er-do-wells and idlers. In Turkmenia the main grounds of divorce, besides polygamy, are opium smoking and cruelty. Very often the dissolution of the marriage was simply due to the fact that young wives refused to continue to live with their old husbands, to whom they had formerly been sold.

In general, in these early days, not only was the right of divorce made use of with excessive frequency, but also abused. Women often divorced their husbands because

they were displeased about some trifle. It sufficed if a neighbour had received a present from her husband which the woman's own husband either could not or would not buy. The woman registrar at Ferghana told me that in several cases women had divorced their husbands and registered a fresh marriage several times within three months. Since then there has been a check on the rage for divorce, and also on the extremely thoughtless and flippant contraction of marriages which was common at first. The number of marriages contracted already exceeds that of divorces, which has not been the case for some time in Central Asia. There are likewise—an unheard of innovation in these countries—unmarried women and marriages between younger men and older women, with a difference in age of frequently ten or more years. Mixed marriages are also common, for European women show a preference for marriage with native men. But the decisive change in the whole situation is to be found in the fact that Eastern women have won, together with the right of divorce, the right to choose their husbands freely.

Moreover, the women's taste has changed with the new times. In former days the maiden dreams of a North Caucasian girl were something like this: "I won't marry you if there is anything you are afraid of, if you are not rich enough, and if you have not stolen a Cossack's horse and killed a man." But now they are like this: "I won't marry you if you haven't learnt to read and write, if you are not a shock worker, and if you don't take part in collectivization."

So, too, it happens in Central Asia that the engaged couple's friends and relatives, who till yesterday inquired about the family, property, and standing of the parents, are now chiefly eager to know whether the young man is a shock worker and whether the bride has worked a sufficient number of days in her *kolkhos*; how high, that is, both partners have climbed up the new social and economic ladder.

The same trend that we find in the Caucasus and Central Asia may be traced in Northern Asia, less strongly marked, perhaps, but unmistakable. Here, too, among peoples who are often still in the pre-historic stage of development, efforts are made to win the population, in the same way and by the same means, for the whole programme of construction and for the liberation of women; for instance, among the Samoyedes by means of the wireless, and of travelling cinemas and theatres. The success achieved is in both cases the same. Thus, not long ago there were complaints of a rage for divorce among the women throughout the North, especially among the Chukchees. And it strikes us as strange when we read accounts of the way in which the tundra is awakening from thousands of years of sleep, taking its place in the process of industrial advance, and proceeding from the state in which it has no history to the march of history, and how women are playing their part with feverish eagerness. On January 17th, 1930, it was possible to hold the FIRST CONFERENCE OF NORTHERN WOMEN. Its membership included Ostiak, Samoyede, and Tungus women, besides numerous others. The delegates reported that the work of liberating the women had not yet advanced very far in the North, but they noted with satisfaction that even in the most desert and forgotten regions there were women in the local Soviets. In addition a vigorous campaign was conducted against Shamanism in general and the activities of the female *shamans* in particular. But the most convincing evidence of the awakening of women in Northern Asia is a new folk tale, doubtless a variant of an older one:

. . . In Lake Pashego there lived a mighty lord. Women were formerly forbidden to fish in this lake. When the men sailed over the lake in their *karabasses* and caught fish, the women went along the shore and drew the nets out of the water with long ropes. The women were hurt that they were only allowed to do this, and they were discontented. Then one of them went and put on her best clothes and got into a *karabas*. When she

began to fish, the mighty lord of the lake rose out of the water and asked: "Who has given a woman leave to fish here." Then the woman boldly replied: "He who is not afraid, and she who is now fishing." Then the mighty one was enraged; he rose out of the lake and betook himself to the mountains. Since that day the women fish there just the same as the men.

Everywhere we find the same awakening from profound slumber. Energies gathered during centuries of patience burst forth in the struggle of Eastern women. Those who had been accustomed for generations to hold their peace now open their mouths and find flaming words of indignation. Even the melancholy tunes of the East sound different nowadays, they have a positive ring and summon the people to a new life.

Life is changing fundamentally. The revolution is beginning in the home, where the wife is ceasing to be a beast of burden and the daughter-in-law the scapegoat for the whole family. The waters of renewal are flooding all departments of life. And it is symptomatic that societies to promote a new way of life are springing up everywhere: in Yakutsk and in the Caucasus and Uzbekistan, there are "Unions of the new *Byt*," and "Societies to Combat *Kalym* and Polygamy." Achievements which would only call forth a supercilious smile in the West, here indicate the beginning of a new epoch. And when a Kirghiz woman mentions with pride that in her district there are a number of *kibitkas* where they eat with knives and forks, we detect in her words the footprints of the mighty march of history, in great things and small. The same is true of what an old Kazakh woman related, which I will quote word for word:

Once upon a time we Kazakhs were very modest in our demands. We slept on mats, without beds, and when we woke up in the morning, all our limbs ached. But since we have joined the *kolkhos* we have bought beds, blankets, and pillows. And just look what lovely white bread I am baking. My mother had no thimble and pricked her fingers when she mended. But I have

already got a sewing machine. And we don't drink our tea out of the dirty brass pot any longer, but out of a nickel *samovar*. And I and my family don't live in a dirty *yurta*, that used to be full of snow in winter, but in a cottage with two rooms.

Yet nowhere is the change so radical and obvious as in the position of women, which, indeed, is always and everywhere the test of the cultural progress of a community. A far road has been travelled in these years in the Soviet Union, a road beginning with women devoid of rights, having, as the young Turkman woman *Tasgul Shamuradova* says in a poem, two laws instead of rights: their husbands and the stick. But the end of the road is marked by a somewhat paradoxical statement made by an Ingush woman in the Northern Caucasus: "It is the women who rule among us now, the men only work." Indeed, many Eastern women are inclined nowadays to emphasize their own achievements to the detriment of the men's, and to point out that women are harder workers. For instance, the woman President of a *kolkhos* in Uzbekistan once said to me that, though her doctor was competent, yet she must try to find a woman doctor to take his place, for there was no doubt that the woman would be better.

The general attitude is not, of course, so crude. There can be no question of feminine domination in the Soviet East, till lately so patriarchal, especially in Central Asia, nor is it either desired or attempted. But a Turkman woman was right when she recently exclaimed at an election meeting: "You say that the Soviet Government has done a lot for us women. But it hasn't changed the men yet!"

We must not gauge the degree of liberation attained for women in the Soviet East by the excessive demands of particular women, who see perhaps, without confessing it, something in the nature of an avenging campaign on the part of their sex for centuries of oppression in the process of emancipation. We must rather ask ourselves whether the awakened women of the East are

capable of making use of the opportunities placed within their reach; whether the facts justify the self-assured declaration of a Central Asiatic woman who said shortly after the Revolution: "If only they will give us the opportunity, we will climb to heights of which nobody dreams elsewhere."

Undoubtedly this question, like many others, cannot be finally answered at present. But the answers hitherto attempted are all positive. At the Soviet Conference of Daghestan in 1935 the President of the mountain Republic stated: "I must frankly confess that what the mountaineer women have said here has been much more to the point than what we have heard from the men. Let the men deduce a lesson from it and pull themselves together, for otherwise, Comrades, you may find that the women have outstripped you. It would appear that the mountaineer women are taking more trouble to educate themselves, and are proving much more disciplined and reliable in the workshop, the *kolkhos*, the co-operative, in short, in all departments of cultural and economic life in our Republic, than a large proportion of the men."

The twenty-fifth Women's Day in 1935, which was celebrated in all parts of the Soviet Union with great pomp, was at the same time a review of successes achieved, a survey of what had hitherto been attained in the liberation of women. In every newspaper pæans of praise might be read of the women's efficiency, and great honour was paid to a large number of women shock workers, besides women doctors and actresses, in the Soviet East.

When Kalinin, the President of the Union Central Executive Committee, visited Turkmenia some little time ago, the Turkman women presented him with a woman's dress, a heavy *ssamok* (hat), a *yashmak* to cover the mouth, a good smock, and a long shirt and trousers fastened beneath the girdle. Kalinin was surprised and said: "But I don't want to marry a Turkman woman;

I am married, and polygamy is forbidden. Why do you bring me all this? Besides, my salary would not be big enough to pay the *kalym*!" The Turkman women replied: "Take these clothes; they are to remind you at all times of the slavish position of the Turkman women, and of what the Soviet power has done for them, and has still to do."

Finally, before I enter in more detail into the participation of Eastern women in the work of economic, cultural, and political construction, let me cite a report which bears witness to the fundamental change that has taken place in the last decade in their lives and their position. It was given by an old Buriat Mongol woman at a *kolkhos* meeting:

"How shall I begin the story of my life?" said Granny Mashit, whilst twenty pair of burning eyes were fixed upon her. "it is hard to imagine what a hard life we Buriat women once had. It makes your heart bleed to think of the long, dark years, and of our bitter lot. I was married very young, without my consent being asked, without knowing whether my bridegroom was old or young. I only knew that he had paid a good *kalym* for me—three horses, a yoke of oxen, and four cows. Married life was a heavy yoke. My mother-in-law was very severe; she avenged herself on me for all that was bitter and hard in her own life as a woman. I received blows and reproaches, and had to bear it all silently. All my sufferings found expression in melancholy songs of lamentation:

" 'Khasartakhan moriyem
Khasarlád barikhan, khairtay.
Kharain bagar barapai,
Khadamdo ukhun gomodoltay.

" 'They reft a foal from the herd's free straying,
Alas! what sorrow so young to part.
An old wooer calls the child bride from her playing,
Alack, and alack! for her sad young heart.'

"At the end of nine years my husband died, and I was left with two children. About that time it was rumoured that the

Tsar had been deposed. We could not grasp it at all, and did not know that anything unusual had happened.

" . . . And then unheard-of things began to happen. People came from the town and summoned us women to a meeting. At first we went suspiciously, even in fear. And then it seemed that scales fell from the eyes of some of us. We grasped, though dimly at first, that they were taking us women under their protection, and summoning us to labour. Since then several winters have been followed by spring. And the days flew past, swifter than deer. Every day we felt more and more the new factor in our lives.

" In 1926 there was our first *kolkhos*. In our *ulus*, the old village, the organizations began to work vigorously; we rose to the light as if from an underground cave, and threw ourselves heart and soul into the cause. In 1927 I joined the *kolkhos* too. A year later, at the age of fifty-five, I was elected to the women's organization.

" My inner life grew brighter and brighter, the feeling that a new, really human life was beginning for me grew stronger and stronger, since we women were accorded equal rights. And when I look round in this meeting, I see all about me women who are nowise behind the men in their work, and sometimes outstrip them. When we look at the young people of to-day, we are filled with exulting joy. Bright days have dawned, a fair life has begun. There is not a single family in our *kolkhos* where the children do not go to school.

" In the old days a girl was huddled all her life in a *khalat*, like a nut in its shell. Who ever dreamed of washing underclothes? Every day, year in, year out, we wore trousers of sheepskin, all lousy. One piece lasted a lifetime. But now I myself have several undergarments. And you scarcely come across anyone who does not wash every day. It is a pleasure to see the young people of to-day. They all go to school and to the Circle, and grow up into honest citizens. I am old, but I have just bought a stringed instrument, that I should never have thought of formerly. I bought an accordion for my son. And so my house is all gaiety and merriment. And I, old Buriat woman that I am, I no longer sing the old, melancholy songs, but new songs about a new life . . ."

WOMEN IN THE EAST HELP TO BUILD UP THE NEW LIFE

LIGHT FOR THE EAST!

ONE THING ONLY CAN BE STATED ABOUT EASTERN WOMEN'S participation in the cultural, social, and economic life of the Union, for that life is itself in a state of daily transformation: that it is constantly growing, visibly expanding. And we may add that here, too, as in Soviet Russia, equality of rights between the sexes, although checked to a more or less degree by a variety of geographical, historical, and ethnical barriers, is yet advancing step by step towards its full realization. At least a point has been reached where the national life of the Soviet East would be unthinkable, nay, some believe impossible, without the active co-operation of women.

We cannot separate the question of women's participation in cultural constructive work in the Soviet East from that of the general cultural achievement in the national territories within the Union. I have already referred to the Soviet policy of basing cultural constructive work in all non-Russian districts of the Union upon the native language. The principle that the language of the administration and law courts, and in general of all public activities, must be the national language, has never been called in question since the great Revolution. But considerable difficulties soon confronted those who tried to put the principle into practice, the greatest being the undeveloped character of the languages of the Soviet East. With a few exceptions they were dialects lacking not only in the means of

expressing what the people's daily increasing needs required, but in many cases also in grammar and script. Dozens of the peoples of the Union have never been able to write in their native language, because it simply had no alphabet. And so the new Government was faced with the task of subjecting the unwritten idioms of the former "aliens" to systematic linguistic study, of determining their grammatical rules, and of raising them to the status of written languages by **CREATING NEW ALPHABETS**. That was no easy task, for not only was the number of these unwritten languages extraordinarily large, but they were also isolated, hard to learn, primitive, and their structure seemed to mock all grammatical rules. There are languages like the Abkhazian in the Caucasus, of which linguists seriously declare that its sounds simply cannot be fixed by means of written signs.

Whereas, therefore, the creation of new alphabets was at first a purely political need, it soon developed into a problem of scholarship. And strangely enough it turned out that Soviet Russian linguists became for the national territories of the Soviet East in a certain sense what the missionaries of civilized European countries once were for the colonial territories, though, of course, under totally different conditions; that is, the pioneers and forerunners of a new civilization. And so labours were accomplished whose importance extends far beyond the frontiers of the Union, labours which mark a decisive stage in the worldwide historical process destined to complete the constantly advancing unification between the cultural level of East and West, and called in the West "the Europeanization of the Orient," but in the Union its "sovietization." Without a knowledge of these labours it is no more possible to gauge the significance of the cultural activities in the Soviet East than to survey the cultural co-operation of women.

No less than thirty-eight peoples in the Soviet Union

were formerly without an alphabet. Thirty-one more—including the most numerous lingual group in the Soviet East, that of the Turko-Tatars—used Arabic characters, and some Mongol and Chinese, others again hieroglyphics of their own. But since all these characters are too complex to be learnt by the masses of the people—for instance the Arabic alphabet, which has no vowels and which provided the basis of writing for twenty-one peoples—reading and writing had always been, without exception, a privilege of wealth in all parts of the Russian East, a kind of secret science, which prevented any such spread of education as was the aim of Soviet propaganda.

Thus the new masters of the Union were fully conscious of the importance and the difficulties of their undertaking, and when the inventor of the new, latinized, alphabet first discussed his work with Lenin, the latter is said to have uttered the sentiment often quoted since: "*That* will be the true revolution in the East." The idea quickly spread and was seized upon with the verve that is so characteristic of the Russians, and soon the authorities set about realizing the scheme. There is to-day a special sub-committee of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union, the CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE UNION FOR THE NEW ALPHABET.

The following resolution passed by this committee indicates clearly the importance of the reform:

The new latinized alphabet of the peoples with Arabic script in the U.S.S.R. is the true alphabet of the October Revolution. It has proved itself to be a powerful instrument of cultural revolution in the Soviet East, it is easily learnt both by the proletariat and the working peasantry, and is a really revolutionary alphabet for the masses, unlike the Arabic script, which is beyond the reach of the working masses, is confined to a caste, and bound up with religion, and has served for centuries as an instrument of exploitation and enslavement of the working masses in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the Mohammedan divines.

The introduction of the latinized alphabet among the peoples

of the U.S.S.R. with Arabic script is more and more assuming the character of an international movement, for the latinization of writing in the U.S.S.R., being a means of raising the cultural level of the working masses and uniting them in the class war, strengthens and facilitates the international cultural relations of the proletariat and the working masses.

The latinization of the alphabets of the peoples of the Soviet East has also given great encouragement to the adoption of the new alphabet in a number of foreign states in East—Turkey and Mongolia and the Republic of Tuva—and has called forth a movement for the latinization of the alphabet among other peoples with Arabic script: in Persia, Syria, and India, where the movement is subject to persecution by colonial imperialism.

It is likewise interesting that the introduction of the new alphabet gave rise to conflicts which, as might be expected, were designated by the slogan "class war"; for the poorer sections of the population, workers and peasants, had supported the reform in the sharpest opposition to the dying class of the bourgeoisie. But the repudiation by the Mohammedan divines proved more serious than the resistance of the bourgeoisie; their counter propaganda, a kind of accompaniment to their antagonism to unveiling, of which we have already heard, was likewise mainly addressed to the women. The *mullahs* made special efforts to prevent the women from learning the new alphabet, appealing to tradition and religious interests. All the weapons of the reaction were directed against those women who accepted the reform with enthusiasm, and things went so far that in certain districts of the Soviet East the teachers of the new alphabet were attacked and their female pupils assaulted.

In spite of all this there was no stopping the progress of the movement and twenty-one peoples at once adopted the latinized alphabet, first among them the Turks of Azerbaijan, who abandoned the Arabic script as early as 1922. Similar attempts had been made there even under the Tsarist régime: native liberal circles had

made the reform of the alphabet a plank in their platform even then, but were unable to break the resistance of the ruling caste, who adhered to the ancient tradition, largely for religious reasons. The Bolshevik Revolution strengthened the hands of these progressives, and the introduction of the new alphabet here assumed the form of a definite mass movement. Old men with shaky hands prepared to learn the new alphabet, and all the reports dating from that time emphasize in particular the enthusiasm with which the women supported the innovation. The movement rapidly captured town and village, and a special newspaper was actually started to popularize the reform.

The other Republics soon followed the example of Azerbaijan, especially those with a Turko-Tatar population. The Karachais and the Kabard-Balkars in the Northern Caucasus adopted the new alphabet in 1924. Three years later the aboriginal peoples of Central Asia followed: the Kazakhs, Kirghizes, Turkmans, and Uzbeks; then the Tajiks, the Mountain Jews, the Kurds, Aisors, Kalmucks, Buriat Mongols, and others. This innovation, again, was accompanied by much strife. The first to join the movement were the Japhetic peoples of the Caucasus, and the peoples of the North were the last to receive the new alphabets. Of the various tribes living in Northern Asia not one had a written language, and from 1926 onwards the Leningrad Institute of the Peoples of the North has directed its efforts to the creation of an alphabet for these unwritten tongues. The committee to whom this immensely important cultural task is entrusted includes, besides distinguished ethnologists and linguists, several women. The work was completed on December 13th, 1930, and the twenty-six small nationalities of Northern Asia were endowed with their own latinized alphabet.

In a general way the transition to the new alphabet was concluded with the first Five Years' Plan, and there

are now seventy peoples, counting almost thirty million souls, who have adopted the innovation. Yet the alphabet is nowise regarded as an end in itself, but as a means of raising the masses to a higher level of culture. Here, therefore, as in so many respects in the Soviet Union, we have a remarkable process: peoples who have only just acquired the means of writing, are learning their own mother tongue, and as a rule Russian scholars are teaching them. It is no exaggeration, then, to say that many of these peoples have learnt, not only to write, but to speak, from the Russians. A single example will illustrate the amount of labour and patience that has been required: on the upper reaches of the River Karachai in Daghestan lives the tribe of the Agules, counting barely 8,000 souls. When the linguist Shaumyan of the Leningrad Academy of Sciences drew up a grammar of their language some little time ago, he had to distinguish no fewer than thirty cases in their declensions.

The peoples who have hitherto been without a written language express their delight in their re-created mother tongue in poetry, at once naive and touching. Thus the Kumik poetess *Egin Ajiyeva* of Daghestan sings:

WE, TOO, HAVE OUR LANGUAGE!

How long, ye little peoples, ye seek
Your hidden, lost language in vain,
Like a birthmark upon a woman's cheek,
That beneath the *chadra* has lain.
We lived long under a bitter yoke,
And our sacred mother-tongue
From her slumber never awoke
Till the spell that roused her was sung.
Now the yoke is consumed
By revolt, the mighty fire;
Now our minds are illumed
And knowledge new we acquire,
We learn to speak, to read, and to write
The tongue that we love as our mother bright,

One of Lenin's most quoted sayings is: "Without the ABC there is no such thing as politics, but only gossip and prejudice. *An illiterate is shut out from politics.*" And so it is a matter of course that *Likbes*, the liquidation of illiteracy, stands foremost everywhere as one of the chief pillars of the cultural programme of the new state.

In pre-revolutionary Central Asia only two per cent of the population could read and write, in Transcaspia only one per cent. But by the beginning of 1934 the figure had risen in Central Asia to 70 per cent, and there is a corresponding advance in education. Whereas during the last fifty years of Tsarist rule in Central Asia a total of 460 schools were established, mostly serving the purpose of Russification and, of course, only accessible to the wealthiest section of the population, the same area had 1,915 schools by 1924, and in the succeeding ten years the number rose to 11,186, so that it increased sixfold. Universal compulsory education was introduced throughout the Union, and there are already wide areas in the national territories where almost the whole population can read and write, for instance, Northern Ossetia and the Kabard-Balkar Republic, where there were still 88 per cent illiterates in 1930. The schools frequently serve the cause of conciliation between the nationalities. In Rostov on the Don I talked with scholars of the "courses for mountaineer women," who lived peaceably together in a hostel and belonged to some twenty different mountain tribes which, in the past, had carried on bloody feuds for centuries.

Of course large numbers of women are included in this vast system of instruction, created in order to liquidate illiteracy. They are the most zealous scholars of the *Likbes* in the Eastern territories, as in Russia proper. I heard distinguished leaders in the Soviet state speak with enthusiasm of the perseverance and industry of these *Likbes* women scholars, of their patience and devotion

to their task, and a number of cases are cited of women of eighty who have learnt to read and write. A Transcaucasian newspaper recently published a letter from a woman of seventy who begged the head of the *Likbes* to admit her, saying: "Please, let me learn. My eyes are still young, and I don't want to die blind, I should like to read the papers."

As we have already seen, the reduction of illiteracy is one of the chief aims of the Red *Yurtas*, which organize special courses for the purpose. In agricultural districts instruction is often given during the work in the fields. One hears of Yakut women who work ten days in the month in order to go to study in the town for the remaining twenty. It has been statistically calculated that each of these on the average draws two more from her village to the town. In Uzbekistan, where before the Revolution only one Uzbek woman in a thousand could read and write (even among the men it was only four per cent), several schools were established for women and girls still wearing the veil. By 1925 there were already twenty-one *Likbes* courses with 1,200 grown-up women as pupils. In the same year in Turkmenistan there were ten courses with 270 women; and here I must mention that before the Revolution there were said to be only twenty-five women in all who could read and write, though the figure has never been checked. For a long time there was a shortage of teachers in these countries. The *Likbes* movement embraced in all in the years 1929-30 more than 800,000 of the minority races.

Whereas the first Five Years' Plan aimed principally at the more elementary tasks of introducing the alphabet and of the *Likbes*, what is now needed is to stabilize the languages themselves, their orthography, and their scientific terminology, to study the dialects, and so to develop literature on all sides. We may state without hesitation that in systematizing the separate languages and making them known, far more has been accom-

plished in a decade or less than formerly in the course of centuries, though it is a matter of course that the advance of the various peoples varies in speed according to their cultural level before the coming of the Soviets, just like their economic progress to-day.

For this reason the Turks of Azerbaijan or the Tatars, who have possessed a highly developed civilization from ancient days, cannot be taken as an example. But we may cite a number of other peoples, who formerly had no written language, such as the Japhetic Avars with their many dialects, who now have their own orthography, their grammar, terminology for mathematics, chemistry, and physics, dozens of textbooks and others, their own dictionaries, newspapers, and journals (including artistic and literary magazines), and even national groups of poets and authors. Or again, the Kalmucks, formerly oppressed beyond measure, using an ancient alphabet of Mongol, Buddhist-Lamaist origin, with hardly two per cent literates—and those mainly among the divines—and possessing neither a printing press nor text-books in their own language. But by 1935 it is stated that illiteracy was 86 per cent abolished, and in the Kalmuck country there were 230 schools with a four years' course and two dozen with seven years, 470 native teachers, 25,000 scholars, 140 reading huts and Red Libraries, ten Colleges and Central Schools, a Teachers' College in Astrakhan, and a special chair of the Kalmuck language with twenty assistants who are constantly undertaking linguistic excursions. In the same period nineteen Kalmuck printing presses were established, and seventeen newspapers and three magazines, besides text-books and dictionaries, were published. The number of NEWSPAPERS appearing in the Soviet Union is estimated as about 10,000, of which 2,700 ARE PRINTED IN SIXTY NON-RUSSIAN LANGUAGES, some twenty-five of them in the Kirghiz Republic, which had not formerly a single newspaper. *Bashkurdstan*, a newspaper appearing in the Bashkir

Republic and one of several hundreds, has a circulation of 27,000, and there is no corner, however remote, in the vast realm, where there is not at least one organ in the local language.

The most distinguished linguists in the Soviet Union are now making a study of idioms practically unknown a short time ago, and are hardly able to keep pace with the demands arising on all sides from the tempestuous advance of national literature and language. There are chairs at various universities in the Union occupied by scholars, including nationals of a number of the Eastern peoples, and the development of the language and literature of the national territories is regarded as a most essential basis in the building up of national culture.

There are native authors' societies in almost all the national states, with an increasing female membership, and everywhere there are learned societies for the study of native and foreign literature, ancient and modern. The works of Shakespeare, Goethe, Molière, Maupassant, Pushkin, Tolstoi, Lermontov, Gogol, Gorki, and others, besides other world classics, are published in the Kazakh tongue, and the like is being done in other Eastern languages. The ancient epics of these peoples, hitherto handed down orally and for the most part unknown, are being carefully collected and studied, edited, and published by special scholarly and literary commissions, and are being translated into Russian and so no doubt made accessible to the rest of the world. In the Kirghiz Republic an old minstrel died not long ago, a bard, who dictated from memory no less than 240,000 stanzas to various scholars in the course of ten years. "You really hear the murmur of a new world, a new creation is in progress here, and a new human race is being born," said Jehal Korkmassov in conversation with me, the chairman of the United Committee for the New Alphabet, who has done great things for this great cause; "the new alphabet has already achieved its revolution in the East."

And so we see every day more clearly that the arrogance of Eastern men has almost entirely vanished. The "younger god" and the "slave" of yesterday now sit on the same school bench, and absorb the new culture together, which is essential for their full and true citizenship in the state whose culture now embraces them both. Thus a totally new, intellectual and cultural, factor of equality between the sexes now for the first time appears in the history of Eastern women; a community of intellectual interests hitherto unknown, and a real comradeship of which they never dreamed before.

The establishment of two educational institutions—the University of the Labouring East in Moscow, the so-called *Kutv*, and the Institute of the Peoples of the North in Leningrad—are of almost equal cultural importance with the creation of an alphabet for the peoples without a written language and the substitution of the Latin for other alphabets.

TWO COLLEGES FOR THE EAST AND THE NORTH

There is hardly anything externally striking in the three-storeyed building in which the University of the Labouring East, the *Kutv* has been housed near one of the busiest squares in Moscow since 1921. Indeed people generally fail to notice the small, insignificant looking plate on the front door which announces that here again is one of the numerous Moscow colleges. But once you cross the threshold and look about you in the corridors, however hastily, you feel yourself transported to so strange and alien an atmosphere, and yet so intellectual to the core, as is rare even in this city, where one is accustomed to so many institutions with a like purpose.

For, while Moscow may in a sense be justly called a centre of light for the whole Soviet East, radiating its beams far and wide, it is hardly less true to say of the *Kutv* that it gathers the numerous threads of all that is

most precious in the culture of the national territories of the vast realm, and that here all are brought into contact and the way paved for the future. For the thousand students of this unique college represent no less than sixty different nationalities, mainly Asiatic. And only the ablest and most talented young people from north and south, east and west, are sent here to be trained.

Who can tell all the names and nationalities? Beginning with the peoples of the land of eternal ice, stretching almost to the Arctic, a land of unending winter and of snow-covered tundra and taiga, thence across the "golden" and "sacred" Lake Baikal, the heights and valleys of the Altai, the endless "red" and "black" sandy deserts, and the green oases of Central Asia, to the highest peaks and remotest nooks of the Caucasus, the Alai and Pamir Mountains, and the sub-tropical coast of the Black Sea, flowering with all the blossoms of Paradise—in all these lands there is hardly a single ethnical group, not even the Nentsis, Syryenians, and other peoples who were formerly "in process of dying out," that is not represented there by one or more students.

There are many women, too, and you see the most varied types: sturdy Mongol women with flat faces, sometimes almost concave, high cheek-bones, and yet often pretty Buddha-like countenances, with a yellow, metallic lustre, pitch-black hair, and sparkling slit-eyes that often seem rather to be indicated by narrow cracks than really to exist. Then there are slender Caucasians, as lithe as gazelles, their skin having often the wonderful faint, mat pink of a peach, their eyes almond-shaped and darkly gleaming, their eyebrows nearly meeting, their profile classic and gait springy; they are modern copies of Queen Tamara. And then again bronze-coloured Turkman women with the heads of Byzantine Madonnas; animated, brown Uzbeks, sometimes resembling Mongols, sometimes Turks, with

fanatically glowing eyes, and wearing their hair short now instead of the former countless plaits that hung like a cape over their shoulders; Turks from Azerbaijan whose heads express their strength of will and sometimes seem almost masculine, and yet are feminine through and through; tall, handsome Tajiks and Iranians, sometimes blue-eyed, who might have strayed hither from the north of Europe.

But whatever the differences among these women and men may be in regard to origin, race, and nationality, they are all equally eager to learn, and all understand Russian, the international language of the Soviet states. All are overworked, and yet always unbowed, confident, and cheerful. And all are in Moscow, and gathered in the classrooms of the *Kuv*, for the same purpose: to acquire as much knowledge as possible, and then, wherever they may be, to act as bearers of culture, in the schools or the Party, as organizers or in industry.

The course of study at the *Kuv* usually extends over three full years. Admittance involves—in addition to membership of the Communist Party—a certain standard of education; and here the authorities are particularly indulgent towards the women. The first year is devoted chiefly to general subjects—mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and Russian. But each student is also required to study his own native language, which is often in the same state of development as himself, and for this purpose the *Kuv* has special teachers. In the two succeeding years there follow all manner of social and historical subjects, and the doctrine of Leninism occupies an important place. The study of general questions of agronomy, cattle-breeding, and the mechanization of agriculture, are also compulsory.

For all these subjects the *Kuv* has its own teaching staff, consisting by now of over a hundred members, and including some two dozen University professors—some very distinguished—lecturers, lektors, and assistants. These last coach the students singly in certain

subjects. And side by side with the study of Russian goes that of Russian and foreign literary classics. Of the modern Western Europeans the most familiar are *Romain Rolland*, with his *Jean Christophe* and *Wells*, with his *Time Machine*. Every six months all the students are closely examined in their newly acquired knowledge. The *Kuv* has, further, not one, but several libraries (in all foreign languages), including specialist libraries for the study of everything connected with the East, and housed in modern, pleasant rooms; and likewise various other scientific collections and institutes. It goes without saying in the Soviet Union that there is a plentiful variety of cultural appointments, wall newspapers, and literary, musical, dramatic, and athletic groups, and, moreover, that the students dance a great deal.

In the fifteen years of its existence, some thousand persons from all parts of the Soviet Union have passed through the full course at the *Kuv*, including some hundred women; the greater proportion come from the less remote and culturally more advanced districts of the Northern Caucasus and Transcaucasia.

All the students at the *Kuv*, with an average age between twenty-five and twenty-seven, receive state scholarships and are housed in special hostels, plain but attractive, where they also have their meals. Lodging is free, a small sum is taken for food, and everything else supplied to the students at cost price. The unmarried men and women live in separate rooms and there is a special children's home for the children of the married couples, who generally come together to study. If you ask the unmarried students whether they are thinking of marrying, you regularly receive the answer: "I have no time." But at the end of the three years of study, before their final departure from Moscow, there are regularly announcements of marriages contracted between students, and it almost always turns out to be members of different nations and races who

have come together. Moreover, a number of students marry Russian women.

During the last few years I have made the acquaintance of a number of women studying at the *Kuv*, and have even made some good friends among them. But it is still a mystery to me how these beings, only just aroused from a death-like sleep, often treated worse than the beasts but a short time ago and handed over in the market, for a mere trifle, as living packages to any buyer that came, have made such rapid progress that conversation with them, not only on social and political subjects, is often far pleasanter and more stimulating than with many a Western European university woman, whose course of study is, indeed, much longer, but her horizon much narrower.

These women, risen from the depths of their people, have a marvellous inborn tact, propriety, and taste, besides a sense of duty, and their attitude towards the teachers and directors of the *Kuv* is free and independent and yet always dignified. It is true that these latter themselves make a point of not being regarded by their pupils as a pompous clique, but rather as a group of older and more experienced comrades. One need only watch the Head or Assistant Head of the institution in conversation with one of the students, and see how thoroughly they know the life history and home circumstances of each one of the young people under their charge, how they enter into all his concerns, with what delicate psychological tact they seek to lead and guide him, and yet on how individual a basis, and with what gratitude and confidence they are rewarded, in order to divine the new world and new ethical consciousness that is growing up. Then it is no longer surprising to learn that all the former students of the *Kuv* are still in close contact with it, and we are bound to admit that this *alma mater* of theirs, whose light already radiates to the remotest corners of the vast Soviet East, deserves the name more, perhaps than any other, and may bear it proudly.

But when anything undesirable occurs in the Moscow circle of this numerous and many-tongued family, it is interesting and instructive to see how the Head deals with the case. One day the Head of the *Kutv* told me that he had just settled a dispute which, indeed, was rare in his experience, but which nevertheless troubled him, and that no less than seven young women were compelled to submit to his ruling. It was a group of *Kutv* students of various nationalities sharing a room in a *Kutv* hostel, and for some reason they quarrelled; the quarrel continued so long that at last it came to the knowledge of the Head. But that was enough. For the women were not ordinary students, but systematically trained future teachers, responsible cultural and social workers, in short, people whose task it was to maintain strict discipline over themselves and to set an example to others, and so small consideration could be paid to the fact that the group included one or two high officials, indeed a member of the Executive Committee for Abkhazia with a good record of service, a representative of the Abkhazian Government. The position was quietly and amiably explained: either the group of women must immediately realize their importance, their duties, and the intolerable nature of the present state of affairs, or they might have to leave the *Kutv*. Sadly crushed and deeply ashamed the company learned their lesson and yielded.

That same evening they were introduced to me in the presence of the whole body of the *Kutv* in the big hall: a Kalmuck, a Urote, an Ossete, a Kazakh, an Abkhazian, an Armenian, and a Svanetian. The Head and Assistant Head and several lecturers, as good, peace-making comrades, sat with us at the tea-table, all was forgotten, and the women talked to me for hours about their lives and their homes, what it had been like formerly and how different it was now.

"When my father died after forty-five years of hard work," said *Klava Koki*, a Kalmuck born in the family of a poor net-maker near Astrakhan, speaking very good

Russian which, however, she had only learnt a few years ago, "my mother could not possibly maintain her five children, and she sent us to different strangers. At first I lived in a children's home. But then I hired myself as a *nyanya*, a children's nurse, in a strange family. In 1923 I entered the *Komssomol*, and was sent thence to the village school, and in 1926 I was admitted to the Party; I worked in various capacities, partly in the *Shenoidyel*, the Women's Section, and now I am a member of the Governing Commission of the district of our capital, Elista; I am married and continue to study, and I have my child with me here. How did our women live in former times? Oh, oh, it was terrible. When once they were married, they might not show their faces for two years, might not sit in the presence of the parents even of their own husbands, nor take off their hats, although their hair was tucked in two plaits into two black bags. For months my poor mother never took off her clothes nor her shoes, she slept all her life on the bare floor, and was strictly forbidden to call her own husband or his male relatives by their names, or even the dog. . . .

"But now we have women who are doctors, and a number of teachers, midwives, and women who, as Presidents of *kolkhoses*, force their husbands, who are not officials, to work so that it is no joke for them. We have our own Teachers' College, our Workers' Faculty, our Agricultural College, special colonies for cattle-breeding, and even a special College of National Art in Saratov.

"When I was first brought to Moscow, I was afraid to leave my room or to remain alone for a moment. But I soon got used to my new surroundings and now I am quite at home here, I have led two political circles for women workers in the Metro, I like going to the theatre, and am quite in the swing. . . .

"In the old days there used to be no bread on the Kalmuck steppes for years sometimes, for you could

not buy it. The cattle-breeders knew nothing of it, and lived entirely on milk beverages. But now we ourselves sow and reap, we live in *kolkhoses*, and build ourselves proper houses, and even the former nomads will no longer live in *kibitkas*."

Argukova, the Urote, took up the tale: "Formerly we did not live for ourselves, but for the cattle. We, the Altaians, were all nomads; at least ten times a year we changed our ground, we had neither settlements nor villages, but just hid in the mountains in two or three felt *yurtas*; we cooked on a hearth in the middle of the *yurta* and lived in a state of lethargy. . . .

"Our women-folk had a particularly hard time. The men went hunting, but the women had not only to do all the house and farm work and gather wood for the winter, but also make the furs for their husbands and children from skins that they themselves tanned, look after all the cattle, and besides that bear a child almost every year, without any help, lying on the cold earth; the babies were never washed, but only occasionally rubbed with fat; they were wrapped up in lambskin, and so 75 per cent of them died.

"There are now six women among us who have passed through the course at the *Kuvv*. I am the daughter of a maidservant and was myself formerly a children's nurse; at the moment I am secretary of our *Komssomol*, I work in our *Kultprop* (cultural propaganda), and am the seventh to study here; we actually have a *komssomolka* who writes poetry. But in the old days we had no writing, only *shamans* and *burkhans* or idols, and only one rich man among us, who had once been a railway journey. Nobody else had seen anything of the kind, and I myself travelled by rail for the first time in 1923. And I found it difficult to get used to Moscow, for it is so quiet in our mountains, so very quiet. Until 1930 we had only camels and horses. But now they have started a motor centre, and at first people were so much impressed by the "machines" that they ran away from them far into

the mountains. An even more powerful impression was made when the members of the Chelyuskin Expedition arrived in aeroplanes in 1934. It almost overshadowed the performance of our famous, ancient hymn, *Khan Altai*, which our students produced in Moscow a few years ago at an "Evening of national Songs, Plays, and Music of the Peoples of the Soviet Union. . . ." Am I homesick for my mountains? Not at present. I am rather thinking of settling in Moscow. . . ."

I sat late that evening in the circle of the young women gathered around me, so frank, so eager, and coming from such totally different countries, and they had never done telling me of the tormenting humiliations, the unceasing inner anguish, which was everywhere the same and which they had been doomed to watch in their mothers in their childhood and early youth, and in many cases had suffered themselves, and of the utterly different life that was now offered to them.

Raya Gamayeva, the Ossete, told me how her widowed mother, fearing that her child might be kidnapped at the age of twelve, as she herself had been, married her daughter at that age to a man whom she had never seen before. How she had to wash the feet of all the men in his family, and all male guests, might not sit in their presence, lived on scraps and cold food, and wore her first cloak in secret, "in the dark." And how she was now studying at the *Kutv* with her husband, in whom she had been fortunate and who was now a *Komssomol* organizer and himself urged her to educate herself, so that they might pass on their knowledge later when they returned home. Then *Nurshamal Ssapaliyeva*, the Kazakh, who was twenty-seven, told how she had been sold at the age of five to a bridegroom of four for three cows, a horse, a camel, six *beshmets* (quilted petticoats), and a "good" foal; but how her mother, who had meantime become a delegate under the new Government and knew well that the *kalym*, the bride-price, had

been abolished, refused to hand over her daughter when she was to be fetched by her future relatives at the age of twelve. How she herself wanted to go to school and did so, and afterwards married a Communist, appeared on the stage for a time, then worked in the law courts, where there are many women nowadays, how she already represented the State in exemplary trials in the *auls* in cases of *byt* crimes, and how perfectly happy she was that now she could supplement her imperfect education in the *Kurv*.

Raya Lagvilova, the Abkhazian, told how the vigorous old people of one hundred and thirty or one hundred and forty, who were not at all rare in her country and were for the most part shepherds and shepherdesses (last year I saw a collection of photographs of these people in the museum at Sukhum), living on into the Soviet era, tried to argue with her. *Tamara Mirsuyeva*, an Armenian from the Region of Nagorni Karabakh—formerly exceedingly reactionary, now autonomous and allotted to the Republic of Azerbaijan—reckoned the dozens of women agronomists, dentists, and Presidents of *kolkhoses* that they already had, as well as schools attended by girls and boys.

Finally came the Svanetian, *Daret Jan Lukhotashvili*, whose almost masculine head, expressive of intellect and energy, and deep-set blue eyes had attracted my notice all the time; she was the first, and so far the only, woman who had found her way to Moscow from the hitherto almost inaccessible mountains of Svanetia, the wonderland of Georgia, of which it was once said that geography had simply flung it at the wall of the central Caucasus range, whilst history has kept the whole land isolated since the eighth century; that "free" Svanetia that never possessed a written literature, but all the more legends, sagas, and songs, besides unique, archaic music and group dances that are full of heathenish suggestions; a land whose inhabitants, of unknown origin, venerate Queen Tamara above all and sing her

praises in magnificent hymns, clinging stubbornly to the supreme law of the mountains, the vendetta, living in mountains about 7,000 feet high in fortresses with Italianized square towers, maintaining the gentile order and showing traces of matriarchy, reaching the age of one hundred and twenty, and, for the rest, observing a code of honour suggestive of mediæval chivalry.

Here was this daughter of the Japhetic Svanetians come down to the plains from a kind of historical preserving jar, the highest on earth; of course she had much on her mind that she had not yet spoken, and we all listened eagerly to her clearly arranged report, given in faultless Russian:

"In the old days we had practically no roads," said Daret Jan; "we were quite shut off from the outer world, and lived together with our cattle. My father, who had married my impoverished mother against her will, turned us both out of the house every winter when I was still quite little, because she had borne him no son. . . . In the end he turned us away altogether, and for a long time we wandered about, cold and hungry and without shelter, and nobody would take us in. . . . Not only our mountains, but also our people, are very rugged and harsh, and they value a human life at hardly so much as a *kopek*. According to the statistics it is not very long ago that at least two hundred people were murdered among us every year, including teachers, judges, veterinary surgeons, Party workers, and doctors. Quite lately a doctor was killed because he had prescribed medicine for a dying child, and the child died afterwards in spite of it. And it was only a year ago that a *Kutu* student was murdered in a vendetta. 'But we never murder women,' say the Svanetians chivalrously, although in former days they often murdered girl babies at birth. That is why there are still far fewer women than men among us.

"And how long ago is it that a young Svanetian who wanted to marry went to the bride's house, took a

cartridge out of his pouch, laid it on the hearthstone, and declared calmly but grimly: 'There will be blood between our houses, if you refuse me the girl.'

"But now proper roads are being built in our country. There are already dozens of schools with a course of four to seven years, not only in Mestia, our capital, but in other places. We have a Teachers' and an Agricultural College with hostels, we have our hospitals, medical centres, chemists' shops, and bathing establishments. Mortality is being greatly reduced, and illiteracy has been liquidated by as much as 59 per cent.

"Do you want to know about my own life? I completed my course at the *Rabfak*, the Workers' Faculty, in Tiflis in 1930, then I worked on the Central Executive Committee for Georgia, and came thence to Moscow; I really wanted to be trained as an airwoman, for I am a good horsewoman and won a prize as a Varoshilov markswoman. But there was one hindrance: the fact that at that time I did not know a word of Russian, and I could not be accepted anywhere.

"I was considering whether it would not be best to return home, so I appealed to our representatives here in Moscow. They gave me the money for the journey home. I went to the booking-office at the station and had to wait at the end of a queue of twenty-seven people, and all the time I was turning it over in my mind, should I go home or not. When there were only three in front of me and it was nearly my turn, I resolved against it, and as I turned away my roubles slipped out of my hand; I said to myself: 'No! The folks who warned me earnestly at home against carrying out my plan, because it was bound to end badly, must on no account prove to have been right. I, as the first Svanetian woman to come to Moscow, ought to be ashamed of giving in so soon, for it would do untold damage to the woman's cause.' And I began afresh to hunt for a place. Again I had many inner struggles to go through, and many wanderings. But this time I held to my purpose steadily

till they told me at the *Kutv*: 'Your education is not really sufficiently far advanced, but we will take you nevertheless.'

"And now I have been happy here from the outset, although I am surrounded by so many alien nationalities. For at bottom I feel closely akin to them all. And the more I learn, the more convinced I am that, whereas in the old days I should by now have borne a dozen children, we women are now advancing to a fine life."

In the old days the Alexander Nevskii Monastery was distinguished by its peculiarly fine peal of bells and the most aristocratic cemetery in old-time Russia, where the tombs of the oldest families in the land were ostentatiously displayed. To-day there is a special Soviet centre for airmen in this cemetery, and in place of the former crosses you see propellers on all sides, whilst short, large-boned figures—men and women—hasten along the alleys past the resting-places of the dead to the former religious academy in the background. Here is the INSTITUTE OF THE PEOPLES OF THE NORTH.

Here, too, the first thing that one meets in the corridors and the once cold and solemn halls is a crowd of noisy, merry young people who receive the visitor pleasantly and shake his hand heartily. But whereas the special characteristic of the Moscow *Kutv* is the variety of faces and types, the impression received here from the first moment is that of heads all having receding foreheads, rough hair, slanting eyes, and often a flat nose, as if all had been copied from a single model carved in stone.

And within these walls you find representatives of twenty-six so-called "small" peoples of Northern Asia, that is, not yet separated territorially—besides a number of other Asiatic nationalities—peoples whose very names were practically unknown in the past. Who ever heard of Lamuts, Negidales, Goldis, or of the formerly "dying"

Mohicans of the North, Kats, Udins, Yukaghirs, numbering sometimes no more than a few hundreds? None of them had a written language, there was hardly a single one among them who could read or write, and even in the "prison of nationalities" of Tsarist Russia the policy of exploitation was hardly anywhere so open and unashamed as among these peoples.

Nowhere was vodka sold in such quantities as on the icy tundra, and the profiteering colonizers, the Russian officials, merchants, and speculators who swarmed in those parts, really made their whole livelihood by soaking the native population with alcohol and extracting their whole quarry, the most valuable furs, from them for a little brandy. Afterwards, indeed, these gentlemen denied that their victims were in any sense human, and called them beasts of the forests and worthless creatures. Small wonder, therefore, that some of the representatives of these formerly God-forsaken regions, where frequently the most primitive stone implements are still in use, and the gentile order, with group marriage, prevails, arrive in Leningrad with none but their tribal names, and only acquire forenames later, as they grow to cultural humanity in the Institute and gain a general education.

The Institute of the Peoples of the North was founded in 1925, but has existed as an independent body only since 1930, and embraces not only all the different types of schools and a variety of courses adapted to the needs of the Far North—courses in the hunting sciences, fishing, tanning, and furriery—but also a special section for research. There are many women among the students, nearly five hundred in number, and the proportion is constantly increasing; at present they make up a third of the total. The chivalrous Tunguses, the "Frenchmen of the North," are the largest group among the "small nationalities," numbering about 40,000, and they send more students than any other.

During the winter specially appointed commissions, which have already come to an agreement with all villages, settlements, and centres, however remote, about the "active" young persons to be considered, note and approve suitable young women as well as men. In the spring, when the tundra is a little warmed by the sun and brings forth its first, sparse flowers, when the first young reindeer and calves are born, and the fish begin to be caught in the nets in the large rivers, then the elect pack their bags and sacks of sealskin, reindeer hide, or fishgut, take leave of their families and of the taiga, tundra, animals, fir trees, and the whole native countryside, and set forth on the road—by no means easy—to Leningrad. It is a road that often takes two or three or four months or even longer, for instance, from Yakutsk, or Cape Chukotsk, or the Commander Islands, and the first part is covered by boat or sledge, with dogs or reindeer, and not infrequently on foot; the railway is only reached at a later stage.

What such a journey means to these Soviet citizens, come forth from their stuffy, dark *chums*, their tents and huts and caves for the first time, may be gauged from their subsequent accounts, which show how at first they cannot imagine that anybody at all lives outside, for instance, Kamchatka, or Sakhalin Island or the Bear Islands; how frightened they are, wondering whether they will really be brought alive to the promised destination, when they travel by sea, where there is nothing but water, no trees, no land, by which to judge in what direction they are going; how the first steamer in which you can travel without oars, the first electric lamp that burns without oil, the first motor-car, the first railway, the first aeroplane—the whole, new, incomprehensible world seem to be ruled by all manner of mighty *shamans* and evil spirits, and how at first they are shaken to the depths of their being, and go about dazed for a long time. It is not only a matter of a journey covering many thousand miles, but of being whirled

through several centuries, often from the Stone Age right into the twentieth century.

This variegated company of Yakuts, Chukchees, Kamchadales, Aleuts, Koriaks, Ulches, Altaians, Syrenians, Asiatic Eskimos, and others, do not as a rule reach Leningrad till nearly autumn. There the new arrivals are housed in their own hostels, are examined anthropologically, medically, and psycho-physically, and allotted to different study groups according to their knowledge and their disposition and abilities, intellectual and general.

As with the Moscow *Kutv*, the syllabus aims at training cultural, social, and economic workers of all kinds—teachers, journalists, co-operators, organizers of *kolkhoses* and co-operatives and the like—in the districts whence the students come. And here, too, there is a special teaching staff of about eighty experts, many of whom have taken part in scientific expeditions in the North for years past, and continue to do so. Every summer, moreover, students are sent for a year to Novaya Zemliya and the Turukhan District, so as to work practically there and return again to Leningrad before completing their studies. A research association, established on a broad basis, which provides for the supply of scholars, devotes itself primarily to linguistic studies, but also to other questions, such as topography, anthropology, the history of women in the North, the family, the gentile order, the “laws of the tundra,” and so on. You often hear people say in those parts: “The Anthropological and the Arctic Institutes are our elder brothers.”

Much care is also devoted to the students' health, among whom there is a great deal of pulmonary disease, due to the wretched conditions under which they formerly lived, although doctors generally say that Northern Asia is “one single sanatorium for tuberculosis,” thanks to the exceptionally favourable climate. A special doctor is attached to the Institute and supervises his

charges' diet; the children of the married students, dearly loved by the parents who, as a rule, live very happily together, are housed in a special children's home. I may mention, by the way, that very accurate records are kept not only of the bodily, but also of the mental, condition of the pupils, big and little, especially of the women, who are sometimes hyper-sensitive, and the observations so made are used for scientific purposes.

For the rest, the doctor states that the Northern Asiatic women are much tougher than the men and have greater powers of endurance, so that organic diseases are less common among them; what he particularly stresses is their fertility. Fifteen or twenty is the normal number of children in a family, and although infant mortality was formerly terribly high in those parts, in consequence of hair-raising hygienic and other conditions, but not least of excessive consumption of alcohol and smoking and chewing of tobacco, not only by the men, but also by the women, yet it is now visibly and rapidly diminishing under the totally new conditions. The peoples that were formerly "dying out" are beginning to revive physically and mentally, and the young people are getting to feel at one with their Leningrad Institute. "We constitute one big family," said the Director with some pride, "and wherever I may be sent in the North, I am sure to find some of my pupils there."

Let me cite an example of the way in which all these people now feel bound together, and how greatly they are concerned for the welfare of each one from their ranks, even to the remotest districts. It is a letter given to a young Reindeer Chukchee, by his local Committee to take with him to Leningrad when he started on his journey in 1927, and is full of interest both for the historian of civilization and the student of human nature:

The bringer of this letter, the Chukchee Teylanto from Anadir, is being sent to be educated in the schools of Soviet

Russia on the recommendation of the District Committee of Kamchatka, so that, when he returns home in a few years, he may share the knowledge he has acquired with his fellow-countrymen. He has passed all his life on the bleak, inclement tundra. The country he is going to is very unlike Anadir. The Committee fears that he may often suffer privations and find himself in difficulties in consequence of his ignorance of the Russian language, and moreover, his own temperament—his peculiar egotism and excessively impressionable disposition—might involve him in unpleasantness. They therefore beg those who read this letter to give all possible help to Comrade Tevlanto, if he should appeal to them in difficulty, and in case of need to communicate with the Committee by telegraph.

Nowadays the students who come to the Institute of the Peoples of the North are required to have some knowledge of the Russian language, for instruction is given in that language for the sake of uniformity. But twice in the six days' week the separate national groups are expected to devote thorough study to their own language. The gaily illustrated wall newspaper, *The North and the East*, is likewise issued in Russian; here, side by side with an attack on Buddha presented in pictorial form (some of the Northern Asiatic peoples profess Lamaism, besides those who are Shamanists) we find the touchingly naïve statement: "All plants grow, and we, too, shall grow to a new life," or, "If you are an idler, you look like a lazy cat." So, too, the journal *Taiga and Tundra* is published in Russian; here, instead of the former accounts by foreign travellers, Tsarist officials, and missionaries of the low state of civilization, and "savagery" of these "alien races," you may now read much that is worth knowing, told by themselves, about their peoples in the past and present. The journal is illustrated with exceedingly interesting drawings by its contributors. For since these folk acquired their own script, their ABCs, and their own newspapers and books—in fact, their own language—they have been seized with an unexampled

passion for learning, reading, writing, and there is no end to what they have to narrate, nor to the leeway they mean to make up. But the first thing they demand is the correction of their tribal names, for the Russian colonizers generally introduced them into literature under the names used by their hostile neighbours, names which they themselves do not acknowledge. Thus there are no such peoples as the Samoyedes, Goldis, Kamchadales, and Ostiaks, but Nentsis, Nanayars, Itelmenes, Khants, etc.

As regards the women, to whom much space is devoted in this journal, it is noticeable that the men now often raise their voices on their behalf, and a report by the Evenk (Tungus) *Afanassyev* in the year 1930 on "The Life of Evenk Women on the Island of Sakhalin" makes strange reading. Here is an extract:

The Evenk women still occupy a difficult position, for centuries of slavery are an obstacle to the attainment of real equality. All domestic and farm work, and family affairs, belong to the women's sphere. It is not without reason that the Evenks have a proverb which says: "A woman must be able to do everything," for it is only then that she is regarded as a real woman. But if there is anything she cannot do, then the whole family is declared to be "unlucky." . . . The various restrictions laid upon women, and the old traditions and laws by which they are not regarded as equals within the family and are oppressed, are closely linked with religion and Shamanism among the Evenks.

Economically a woman is wholly dependent upon her husband, who regards her as a slave, and not as a family friend; he says: "I have paid a price for her, so I can keep her as I choose."

The wife must prepare the food for the whole family, make all their clothes, look after the reindeer and the dogs, make all the harness and saddles, and tan the leather by the most primitive methods. Even when she is pregnant she works up to the last day. If you gave a man all that work to do, he would hardly manage it. But the women get through it, thanks to their tenacity, to habit, and to the fact that they do not spare their strength. . . .

But now the Evenk women are beginning to protest against the oppression of a thousand years, and are gradually realizing the rights granted to them by the Soviet Government. Women are now no longer sold forcibly, are not priced like a reindeer, but the custom is gaining ground that young people only marry for mutual love. The relations between men and women are now improving, for the men are afraid to compel the women to work or to beat them, although there are still isolated cases of both. For all these things can really be abolished only when the Evenks, and their womenfolk too, abandon the old customs themselves. But the greatest obstacle is that the Evenk women are used to their slavery and ignorance, and can neither read nor write. The first necessity, therefore, is to liquidate illiteracy.

That calls for capable organizers to start the movement, who know how to get hold of the native women, for they are very much intimidated and extremely sensitive, and must, therefore, be dealt with very cautiously. . . .

Taliyeva, a Nentsi (Samoyede) woman, tells in the same issue, what a hard time the women of her nation had formerly, especially in the days when there were still Russian merchants living on the tundra:

In those days quantities of vodka were sold, and that destroyed the economic life of the Nentsis and their whole existence. Without a thought of the morrow, the men drank all that they earned by the chase, and when they were drunk they beat their wives. And so it came about that the women, in their despair, themselves began to drink with the men, and so together they lost their last reindeer by drink, and fell into debt and into the clutches of speculators; and it was not till the Soviet authorities came and introduced "dry" legislation, and prevented drink and gambling—the most dreadful vices for women—that the Nentsi women were happy.

And now Nentsi women are beginning to raise their voices against the everlasting yoke, to make use of their new rights, and to play a part in public life. We have already got women as Presidents of Soviets and women members of the committees of co-operatives. We have elementary schools where girls are taught side by side with boys. When the parents come to visit them, the children join together to arrange an entertainment of

which they are afterwards very proud. And we have mothers who are studying hard and who, when they are with child, turn to the doctor and the midwife, and no longer to wise women or even *shamans*. And they no longer give birth to their children right away out of doors, in solitude and cold, on the bare earth with only a straw covering, which of course cost the child's life, but in the hospital, in the Red *Chum*, or in some *Cultbasis*. The first woman in a maternity institution—that was a tremendous gain for us.

Here at the centre, in the Institute of the Peoples of the North, as also in the Teachers' College at Arkhangelsk, future workers are trained to labour among the Nentsi women, and we will exert all our endeavours to free our countryfolk from ignorance and timidity. . . .

Finally, a short description by the Aleut *Khabaroff*, published rather later in the same journal, tells us more than many a lengthy scientific treatise about the situation and character of the Commander Islands, east of Kamchatka in the Pacific Ocean:

These islands are uninviting. All around them a blue, blue desert. Close to the shore, like an icy carpet, a yellow strip of golden sand, sometimes frothy, stretches beside the water.

The water is strong and harsh and salt, a little colder than the ice. But at the same time the water is kindly, calm, only rather sluggish; little white-capped waves lap over the sand and break in myriads of drops of spray against the steep rocks. There are days when both islands quake beneath the fury of the surrounding element. There are days when giant waves advance to the shore like a firm wall, and their roar is lost as they break in salt cataracts far from the land. And then there are days when there is nothing to be seen on the shore but the giant crests of the watery mountains, even where the cliffs are quite precipitous. That is my home.

There are days when the island dwellers hear the roar of the sea beasts from afar in the dark. There are days when the waters, grown calm and kind after a storm, bear their gifts to the shore. Then they leave their precious offerings on the coarse, wet sand: some seaweed, various shell-fish, rotting animals, and the like. The seaweed and the rotting animals, thrown on to the shore by

the waves, are dainties for the island dwellers. But the women long continue to enjoy the shell-fish. That is what my home is like.

The island dwellers love the Bering Sea. They love it when it is calm; they love it, too, when it is angry and loud; and they love it because it is infinitely wide and the islands as small as grains of sand, lost in its endless expanse . . .

Perhaps these young Northern Asiatics, men and women, can express themselves better in concrete images than in writing—in drawing, painting, and the plastic arts—obviously because they have a remarkably keen and practised visual memory. It is marvellous how highly trained is their vision, their taste, their highly developed sense of colour, their feeling for the physical quality of material. I can say without exaggeration that in recent years I have seldom enjoyed such pure pleasure in a Western European art exhibition as I received in the studios of the pupils of this Leningrad Institute from the water-colours, coloured drawings, and sculptured figures; they were, indeed, somewhat primitive, but of high quality, and profound in their composition, movement, line, and in their characteristic colouring, warm and glowing from afar; they had a rare delicacy and sureness of execution. Happily this unique talent is only watched over by experts, and not influenced in any way. For all these people are, in their own way, born finished painters, draughtsmen, and modellers, and do not need to learn their art. To attempt that might do much harm, but could not do any good whatever.

What we see again and again is the bare landscape, the soft, calm lines of the silvery, snow-white countryside when the thermometer registers seventy degrees below zero, the transparent, arbitrarily jagged contours of the delicate groups of fir trees, again and again sledges, dogs, reindeer, bears, foxes, and seals, all in countless variants, faultlessly presented from memory, lovingly, familiarly, on the flat or modelled. And every time one

is amazed, feels enriched by the acquisition of a new world, and is eager to absorb more and more of this unique beauty.

It is striking how much it is a matter of course for the women to use brush, coloured chalk, or chisel side by side with the men, as if they had done hardly anything else all their lives, as if it were all mere child's play for them. A very intelligent young Urote woman answered my question, how long she had been working with the chisel, with the words: "Four whole months."

But the fantastic and incredible nature of what is here being created, in great things and small, strikes us all the more when directly afterwards, in conversation with a Buriat Mongol woman, we learn that in her country "disobedient" wives were put in chains not many years ago, that even at work they had to move about in shackles, that they might not set foot on the right-hand side of the *yurta*, the side of honour, and that already nearly 80 per cent of the women there have learnt to read and write. She told me, too, that there are nearly two dozen young Buriat women who are studying or have studied at the Moscow *Kutv* and the Leningrad Institute, for which the elder women envy them, through for them, too, "the doors of the world have opened wide," and that they have a four-lined verse:

I have a fine, grey horse
That loves the grass of the steppes,
But my young heart
Turns to the new life, to learning and study.

Again, does it not seem fabulous that a young Ostiak woman, akin to the modern Hungarians, from the taiga of Western Siberia, now says that biology and physics are her favourite subjects, but that she loves poetry even more, and herself writes poems—she in whose country girls of twelve were sold not long ago to anyone for a bottle of vodka, where the women were hardly

less victims of alcohol than the men, where it was necessary to issue special posters to teach the people not to eat lice or to wash the crockery with urine. How much is involved when this daughter of the tundra tells on the one hand how the first houses in Tomsk frightened her, for a strong wind could blow them down; how she mistook the first motor bus for a new kind of bear, with round feet and enormous eyes of ice; how she wanted to get out of the first train, for there must be something wrong when it moved mysteriously, faster than the best dog team; how at first she was unhappy in Leningrad, because of the tall buildings that shut out all the view; and when on the other hand she adds that, although she now thinks Leningrad very beautiful and was recently greatly interested in a performance of *Molière's Tartuffe*, yet in two or three years, when she has learned more, she wants to return to her own people. They have recently been endowed with their own alphabet, and she would like to work among them as the first native teacher.

And then the Yakut woman with whom I talked—a representative of the most numerous, most colourful, animated, and tenacious ethnic group among the peoples of Northern Asia, looking like a genuine Chinese god, with her inscrutable face! Was it partly, perhaps, because her legendary ancestress, to whom I have already referred, maintained such an exemplary silence when she was handed round to the guests at table, who cut pieces off and found that she tasted excellent? How much she had to tell of the new Yakutsk, once the mass grave that was the terror of Tsarist political exiles!

She would tell for hours of women of seventy in her home who were now passionately demanding newspapers, and could hardly await the appearance of their own women's paper in the Yakut language, for they had all now learnt to read and write. She told me that they now had women teachers and doctors everywhere, and that there was not a single village in which women

did not occupy responsible positions in the Soviets, Commissions of Control, etc.; that now the women's voices were much more heard in clubs and meetings than the men's; that nobody in Yakutsk, indeed throughout the North—where the people still celebrate savage reindeer and bear festivals, the oldest in the world—would believe at first that they were really hearing speakers from Moscow in the wireless, until several men and women who were studying there in the *Kuv* sent greetings over the wireless in their own language to the native members of the first Women's Conference of the North.

But now Yakutsk itself has a fairly powerful transmitting station, and you can hear Japan and America; the people in almost every *Chum* and every tent, even beyond the Arctic Circle, are familiar with all possible wavelengths. Nowadays you hear women singing new, gay songs in the loud-speakers, instead of the old, sad ones, and nobody dares to say: "If you are a woman, hold your peace." Nowadays the women speak at the microphone of the new age, of their human rights, and call upon others to share the new life and rise to new achievements. And so the narrow slit eyes, that hitherto seemed closed, of the large and "small" peoples of Northern Asia open wider and wider, and drink in eagerly and deliberately the knowledge and light that comes to them from the West, and a whole human race is awakening from its long, long winter sleep, and marches into our era, into history, into the world, unexhausted and craving for action.

THE WOMEN OF THE EAST BECOME ACTIVE

Whilst the great majority of the women of the Soviet East have learnt more or less to read and write, individuals, as I have already said, have come to occupy very high, indeed the highest, positions in their country's INTELLECTUAL LIFE. There are any number of instances in

every field of intellectual activity. The case of the former supernumerary *Mastyura Ssakhaidinova*, a Bashkir, who is now a military engineer, has long been nothing out of the way in the Union. In Moscow there is a Urote woman who passed through the *Kutv*, *Alma Kassurgasheva*, on the staff of the Red University; she was the daughter of a nomad hunter and came fifteen years ago from the Western Siberian taiga. There is a specially large number of able doctors. To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Transcaucasian Federation, the Turkish lecturer *Ragimova*, an oculist, was made professor, the first woman in Azerbaijan to fill such a position. In Baku the distinguished Turkish woman, *Kemal Ragimova*, occupies a leading position as an expert in the oil industry, whilst the Georgian, *Aretunova*, who is chief engineer in the Moscow Kalibr works, where they make surveying instruments, was the first woman to be sent, with three other students of mechanical engineering, to Ford's in America for practical experience, where she was an object of immense interest as a Soviet citizen and a woman engineer. Then a very large number of Turkman women have passed their medical examinations of late, whilst there have been Kazakh women doctors in practice for years, whose patients are thoroughly satisfied. And the most famous aviators in the Union include a number of Eastern women, such as the first Turkish airwoman, *Leila Mahmedbekova*, and *Ssona Nuriyeva*; the first Turkish woman parachutist, *Suleika Sseid Mahmedova*; the first woman pilot in the Tatar Republic, *Yarollina*; the famous Uzbek woman parachutists, *Mirbayeva* and *Attaullayeva*; and others.

As regards Eastern women IN LITERATURE, they have in general hardly advanced beyond the bounds of folklore, of poetry handed down by a free oral tradition, although the literature of Azerbaijan begins with a woman's name, that of *Sibeide Hatun*, who wrote poetry in the eighth century in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian,

and who was followed by other woman poets, right on into the nineteenth century. But to Eastern women, especially Kazakhs, as well as men, the language of poetry is an inner necessity, indeed, the very atmosphere they breathe. And though they no longer mourn for a daughter who marries or a husband who dies in verses rich in imagery, though they no longer lament, yet the most important events in their lives still find expression in poems and songs. And a great deal of the anonymous folk poetry, for instance of the Lesghians in Daghestan, still originates exclusively with the girls and women.

But more than this; in several national territories the names of women authors are becoming known, and the number is constantly increasing. It includes first and foremost the UZBEK POETESS *Aldyn*, whose poems, "Listen, my daughter!" and the "Song of a Dressmaker" and others have been translated into Russian; the ARMENIAN *Sabella Yessayan*, the CHUVASH AUTHORESS A. Nukhrat, whom I have frequently quoted in these pages, the TURKMAN POETESS *Yasgul Shamuradova*, the KAZAKH *Farida Jantuganova*, the TATAR AUTHORESSES, resident in Uzbekistan, *Lola Khan Ssaifullina* and *Darji Appakova*, and many more. *Marietta Shaginyan*, an authoress known beyond the bounds of the Soviet Union, though she, too, is an Armenian, does not belong to this group, for she was writing in Russian in pre-Soviet days, and therefore belongs to Russian, not Armenian, literature.

Even more widespread throughout the Soviet East than poetry are MUSIC and DANCING. Just as most of the representatives of the peoples of Northern Asia show themselves to be born painters and sculptors, so the countries further south are permeated with a sense of rhythm, literally to the finger-tips; these peoples are born musicians, singers, dancers, and excellent actors.

Formerly the women of the Russian East performed their dances to the sound of bells only in intimate feminine circles, accompanying themselves on native instruments

and moving upon beautiful, coloured carpets of their own weaving. Nowhere and never did it occur that one of these women appeared upon a public stage or showed herself before strangers dancing or acting, and the women's parts in public performances were played only by men, generally by male prostitutes.

To-day all the national territories have dozens of theatres where women act, often brilliant actresses. In Ashqabad I attended a performance of Gogol's *Inspector General* in the Turkman language, which could almost as well have been presented in a Moscow theatre. In Samargand it was the same with *Turandot* by Gozzi, and only a short time ago the Moscow Press was full of admiration for the standard of achievement of the visiting Kazakhstan State Operatic Theatre, praising in particular the performance of the Kazakh woman singer, *Kulyach Baysseitova*.

At the present time Kazakhstan, which had not a single theatre in former days, has twenty-two, besides four theatrical studios, its own Philharmonic Orchestra, an orchestra composed of native instruments, its own large choir, and its Schools of Musical Drama and of Musical Choreography. The Uzbek State Opera in Tashkent, for instance, which followed the Kazakh Opera on a visit to Moscow, has such an excellent women's chorus and *corps de ballet* that I liked nothing better than to spend my free evenings there as often as possible. And *Tamara Khanum* a singer, actress, and especially dancer famed throughout the Union, is a really great artist, labouring earnestly and devotedly to perfect both herself and her work; she was greatly applauded both at the International Exhibition of Decorative Art in Paris in 1924, and at the Folk-dance Festival in London in 1935.

Tamara Khanum, "the finest folk artist in the Federal Republic of Uzbekistan," whose acquaintance I made in Tashkent, is only just thirty; she is of medium height, a delicate, very graceful woman, with the head of an old

Persian miniature. Something vital from the ancient East beams in her face, even when she relates how her father, an Armenian turner in the Nobel works at Baku, was once exiled to the Ferghana Valley for distributing forbidden revolutionary proclamations; she was born there, and grew up in what was, at least, a modern atmosphere. She began to dance at the age of four, was then gradually "discovered," and later sent to Moscow to be trained. But she owes her actual achievement to her own perseverance and her close study of the ancient Uzbek dances, and those of all the peoples of the East, including the Arabic and Persian nude dances. She has now advanced so far that in the School of Ballet at Tashkent, which bears her name and of which she is directress, she herself teaches dancing to a number of Uzbek girls and others. Her view of oriental dances in general is that for the most part they are much coarser, more sensual and brutal, than the far chaster Uzbek dances, which are altogether a matter of inner rhythm, temperament, and fire.

It is interesting to observe the part played in Tamara Khanum's dancing, and in that of Uzbek women in general, as likewise of Indian women, by their extraordinarily eloquent action, their rhythmic movement, the plastic motion of arms and hands. You might almost say that she dances principally with her arms and long, tapering fingers, whilst the buoyant soaring and gliding movement of her wholly enveloped body sometimes remains practically on the same spot and seems only an inevitable background. What worlds lie between this impassioned and entrancing dancing with the arms, which is yet chastely reserved and profoundly inspired, this subtle, spiritualized culture of the body, and the oriental dances that we generally see in Western Europe, which are usually a mere display of the naked body, a sensual lure, an advertisement of self.

This dancing is almost without movement; sometimes the feet hardly come into play at all. But at every sound

of the bells, at every softly admonishing, ringing note of the *dutar*, the dancer's shoulders tremble with deep, controlled passion, her arms and her long, thick eyelashes sink. . . . But then, all of a sudden, her carefully shrouded body shoots aloft, so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that your heart seems to stop beating. None the less, the intellectual head that dominates the whole remains motionless, rapt, the pale, bloodless face seems almost petrified, Tamara gazes at the audience with great, sphinx-like eyes, and only her glowing red lips betray something of the mighty flame that burns within her. Sometimes one of these visionary dances is called "The dance of dances," sometimes "Halimeh," or, again, "The Broken Heart"; but we always find the pure, flowing joy in rhythm, it always penetrates with the same intensity to the roots of our being, and after the spectator has departed his own heart, also "broken" at times, long continues to throb.

I saw Tamara Khanum for the last time in Moscow, shortly after she had returned from London with her colleagues from the other national territories. I asked her how she liked the Western dances, which she had doubtless seen there. She answered: "On my way through Paris I went to the Nude Theatre. There were a number of beautiful female bodies, and some charming figure drawings, and even *one* woman dancer who, for a foreigner, was relatively inspired; but all the rest seemed to us too vulgar, too insipid, to interest a spectator who made real demands, and we all nearly fell asleep. Yet if you were to see the quite primitive dances of the Eastern Pamir, or those of the Khoresm people, you would be ready to die then and there after what you had experienced. You only get real dancing when it springs from the innermost soul." And with a side glance at her beautiful, five-year-old Lola, sitting beside her, she added: "Lola is still very little, but she already dances with great inspiration." Lola is already an independent dancer and star in the children's theatre at

Khoresm; she herself criticizes all her mother's grown-up pupils very severely, but will not submit to the slightest criticism from her; in the theatre, however, she stands up on a chair and follows her every slightest movement.

The women of the Soviet East throw themselves into the ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL life of the Union, as well as its intellectual and artistic activities, with unsapped energy and unexampled devotion. Their importance in agriculture is particularly great and fully recognized. Water and land reform in Central Asia, one of the most far-reaching achievements of the Revolution, was a conscious preparation for this change. It meant a death-blow to the gentile order, for the right to land based upon work was introduced, in place of the tribal right that had prevailed from ancient times. Every *aul* was allotted a piece of land and the springs necessary to cultivate it. Therewith the village ceased, even in Turkmenistan, where the distribution according to kindred had maintained itself most vigorously, to be an economic unit based on blood relationship. At the present time the dissolution of the ancient tribal order often takes place by the whole kindred settling together in the *kolkhoses*.

At the same time the RIGHT TO WATER THROUGH MARRIAGE, to which I have already referred in the chapter on the Patriarchate, was abolished. Thousands of peasants who had hitherto been landless could be provided with water and land, and others have their holdings enlarged at the cost of the richer farmers, whose farms have been reduced to a definite size. This reform did much to enable the Soviet régime to obtain a footing in "the land of everlasting thirst," and, we may say, of everlasting land hunger. For the question of water has always been a vital one in these parts, and the cause of most of the quarrels between the separate tribes, often leading to much bloodshed.

In the water and land reform the women were fully considered and generally treated with special favour.

Thus in Turkmenistan, when the right to water through marriage was abolished, over 3,000 Turkman women received water and land at once. Several hundred women's farms received credit from the state. Widows and unmarried women among the peasantry can now organize themselves in agricultural co-operatives. Single women also receive land. Thus in Uzbekistan five hundred women's farms were established in a short time; fifty-two in the Ferghana Valley alone, where the land reform was being carried out in the years 1924-26. The women were also given the necessary stock, and so made into independent farmers. They then joined in eleven co-operatives. Even the first year of their independent work produced good results. The *kolkhos* women had a good harvest and bought fresh stock. At the present time a number of Uzbek women have been trained as tractor drivers.

Women play a specially important part in the agriculture of Central Asia, where they gather 90 per cent of the cotton harvest in most districts. In Kazakhstan, too, they constitute the majority of the workers in agriculture, as in all other Eastern states where agriculture is carried on.

But their greatest importance is in the *kolkhoses*, the agriculture collectives. It is generally stated and frequently observed that in this work they are not only equal, but superior, to the men. Again and again we hear stress laid on their remarkable conscientiousness and their objective attitude, their unselfishness and discipline, and their unreserved devotion to the cause of the community. For instance, in 1933 in the *kolkhoses* of Central Asia 4,600 men and only 381 women were punished for evading work. Payment is made in the *kolkhoses* on the basis of work-days, and most of the statistics show that on the average women earn more than men. As I have already said, when a marriage is in contemplation, people ask how many work-days the bride or bridegroom have to show in the year.

Consequently the women undoubtedly take a leading position in the *kolkhoses* of the whole Soviet Union, and likewise in the Soviet East. The greater number of "shock workers" come from their ranks. At a conference of Uzbek women's organizations a *kolkhos* workman said literally: "Only the blind fail to see the achievements of the women shock workers. And all those are blind who seek to lower the prestige of the women working in the *kolkhoses*."

It is noteworthy, too, that the women in the *kolkhoses* liquidate their illiteracy faster than the men. There are cases where a *kolkhos* wife compels her still illiterate husband to listen to her reading the newspaper. And the competitions in the *kolkhoses* are for the most part initiated by the women, who are generally very ambitious.

Throughout Uzbekistan, as well as in various other parts of the Soviet East, the majority of the country women now belong to the *kolkhoses*, and there are already hundreds of women managers of *kolkhoses* everywhere. Thus the *kolkhoses* have contributed to an undreamed-of extent to raise the general intellectual standard and the self-confidence of the new women in the East.

If we wish to penetrate more deeply into the soul of the *kolkhos* woman, the best plan is, perhaps, to let her speak for herself. The frequent conferences of these women and girls all over the East offer plentiful opportunity. I will choose as an example a notable conference in the Kabard-Balkar Region in May, 1933, at which the oldest native women told a younger audience about their experiences; like conferences took place later in all the national territories. "Before we joined the *kolkhos*," reported Boddan Gochayeva, a mountaineer woman of sixty-one, "our farm did not produce even enough for our oxen to satisfy their hunger. And at the same time we ourselves worked like oxen. But now it is all different. Now I and my sons know what we are working for, and I may say that we do not fail in

industry and zeal. Now we have crockery and good furniture in our house, and blankets too. In the yard we have poultry and cocks for breeding and a cow, and the *kolkhos* stock is increasing yearly."

Another woman tells a like story: "Before I joined the *kolkhos* I worked and sweated from morning to night, and all I got for it was horny hands. In the *kolkhos* a new life, and new world was opened up to me. It is true that I was frightened to go to it at first, for the *mullahs* and *beys* warned us that we should feel as if we were in purgatory, suffering the punishment that Allah imposes on sinners in the next world. But now I have been four years in our *kolkhos*, and so far I have felt nothing of the wrath of Heaven. On the contrary, I get keener on my work all the time. I have learnt a great deal in the *kolkhos*."

At another conference in the Bashkir Republic a *kolkhos* shock worker, Nariyeva Maugla, boasted of what she did; she was fifty-five and bound from seven to eight hundred sheaves a day. "If they tell me that someone else in another brigade works better than I do, I see red. When they ask me if I am a shock worker, I say that I shall be for another ten years. And if they ask me if I do not sometimes feel unwell, I answer: 'I am only unwell when I don't work.'"

A member of the conference who was sixty told the story of her life, and recounted all that she had suffered in the past, and finally she turned to the chairman, saying: "They say that you have influence with the Government, so perhaps you could ask them to issue a decree prolonging life and postponing death. Now we have become human beings, and we should like to live long. . . ."

It is a fact that AGRICULTURE and the *kolkhoses* are the field where the emancipation of women has advanced furthest. Just think what it means, for instance, when a peasant woman, but yesterday economically, socially, politically, nationally, in every way enslaved, brings

the bread home that she herself has earned, and her husband, not long ago the "younger god," awaits her at the hut door beaming with pleasure and receives her as an equal, helping her to carry what she has brought into the hut. Or when many women in the mountain districts of Tajikistan, who are occupied in cattle breeding, live independently on the mountain pastures, separate from the men, whilst the men stay in the *kishlaks*, look after the house, and visit their wives from time to time. Voluminous legislation for the benefit of mothers and children does away with the last traces of patriarchal contempt for women in the Soviet East. Whereas formerly the wife was only a machine for bearing children, and pride in her numerous offspring was confined to the father, respect for motherhood is now continually spreading. The laws secure notable advantages to the expectant mother: for two months before and after her confinement the *kolkhos* woman is exempted from all work, but enjoys full pay, just as was already the case with factory workers.

But in other respects, too, the aspect of the villages in the Soviet East has changed beyond recognition, and the cultural contrast with the towns is growing visibly less from day to day, as everywhere in the Union. The grey clay huts are gradually disappearing, floors are scrubbed with growing frequency—a rare event formerly—furniture and beds are bought, besides knives and forks, soap, and tooth-brushes. In many villages where in the old days hardly anyone sang there is general gaiety, for the girls join in social meetings. And the fact that there are now Central Asiatic women who, as tractor drivers, are at the top of the working hierarchy, is a striking sign of the revolution that has taken place in the Russian East. Fatimah as a tractor driver—that is, indeed, the last word but one in women's emancipation in the Soviet state.

The last word of all is Eastern women IN THE INDUSTRY of the Soviet Union. I need hardly describe in detail

what that meant in the way of tempestuous industrialization, in particular for the backward areas which we are here considering, especially during the first Five Years' Plan. Far away on the steppes, in wildernesses and even deserts, works, factories, "Gigants," miraculous creations of modern engineering, sprang up out of the ground. This is how a Kazakh, full of foreboding, takes leave of the past in his song:

Ah, they will soon die, the steppes; the broom will soon cease to be green. . . . Many a stone city will arise, and in the cities will be factories. Camels and horses will be no more needed. The iron steed, that no white camel can overtake, will now fly across the steppes on iron rails. Ah, they will soon die, the steppes.

§

It would require a special book to do anything like justice to the part played by women in the industrial constructive work of the Union. For they are drawn into the productive processes of the country in masses, and are paid exactly the same as the men; they are given every opportunity to improve their qualifications and receive a systematic training in the countless technical schools, *Vuses*, *Viuses*, and colleges for the utmost variety of positions in the factories. And just as, according to Lenin, every cook must learn to direct the state, so every woman worker in a factory, however unskilled, is enabled to rise to all managerial positions in industry, even that of an expert and scientifically-trained factory manager.

Of course the consequences of drawing women of the Soviet East, inhabitants of a world that had remained a thousand years behind the times, into economic life are much more startling; of course it involves a far greater educational effort, and of course factory life in the East does far more than elsewhere to train women to take their place in the new life. For in the factories they attain a degree of economic independence of which in the past they never dreamed; for the first time in

their lives they receive money and contribute to the maintenance of the family; Eastern women very often earn more than men nowadays. Their self-confidence, their sense of belonging to a great community, which were formerly stunted in the seclusion of home, now grow apace. And further, factory life contributes not a little to understanding between women of once hostile nationalities. Thus emancipation comes as a natural consequence of factory labour and of the fellowship of the men and women workers, and cases are not infrequent in which the factory community intervenes, if a young woman comrade is to be married by her parents against her will or suffers any other injustice.

It will cite the autobiography of a Kalmuck girl of the steppes, taken from a daily paper, to show how Eastern women advance culturally and intellectually in the factories:

I learned to sing songs on my native steppes, on the shores of the grey Caspian Sea. But I only learned to understand them since I entered the factory. When we sing at our work, I always lead. And I do so like it when a lot of people are together. They are all brothers, and it's so lovely. And I love the factory because I learned to work there and grew to be a human being.

To-day, on the eve of Women's Day, when I reflect on my past life, this is what I see; women had a bad enough time in Russia, but for us Kalmuck women it was ten times worse. I was eight when my mother died, and twelve when I lost my father, and I knew well enough why they died so young. They had worked beyond their strength all their lives; my father kept the immense flocks and herds of the rich *bey*, Buldagayev Bucha, my mother milked the cows and mares, and we children were always hungry. My father had not even a proper *kibitka* to protect us from cold and damp.

And what is the life of a Kalmuck orphan? Only the *Kamsamol* cared for me and let me learn something in an institution. In 1930, at the age of nineteen, I entered the factory and for the first time came to know the new life and new people. I did not know a word of Russian, and at first I was often laughed at; but it was not the malicious laughter of that brigand of the

steppes, Bacha, it was good-natured, friendly laughter. Last year I went to visit my native steppes. There have been great changes, there too, in recent years. But I am happier in the factory and I shall not leave it. I am pursuing my aim resolutely, I have learnt to read and write, have studied a book on the turner's craft carefully, and have passed my *Soctech* examinations with distinction. In my free time I like reading Pushkin, and I am proud that he dedicated a little-known poem to Kalmuck women.

It is exceedingly significant that, whereas at first it was very difficult to get Eastern women to leave their *ichkaris* and enter the factories, they now find their way there without pressure. It is of importance that industry is developing faster in the national states than in Russia proper, so that it is possible to give work to a growing number of hands, and also to bring in more and more women. The clubs and other women's organizations do all they can to rouse the women to a liking for factory labour, and there is a pretty poem by a semi-illiterate Kabard woman, Fatima Sarashtova, who saw a factory for the first time on a propaganda trip for mountain women to the works and factories of Rostov on the Don, and set down her impressions in these improvised lines:

At home we bake flat loaves on the hearth,
Here they roast red iron in huge furnaces.
And its smell is so wonderful
That, if I were to be born again,
I should only want to be destined for the factory bench.

The first Uzbek women who entered the factories still wore their *paranjas*, and only laid them aside in the workshop, during their work. But that they were finally discarded was in no small degree the consequence of factory labour. Of course a great many Eastern husbands did not like their wives becoming industrial workers, and there were not infrequently desperate struggles before it came to be regarded as a matter of

course that women should work in the factories, and the men realized that there was nothing degrading in helping their wives sometimes in their domestic labours.

In the old quarter of Samarqand, Tamburlaine's city, I visited the silk-spinning mill *Khudshum* (Assault), with its thousands of workers, of whom as least 80 per cent are women, principally Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Bukhara Jewesses, who wore *paranjas* just like the rest of the women there and were strictly secluded from the rest of the world. Like all the factories in Turkistan, it labours to produce, not only the "silken gold," but also new human beings, new women of the East, to whom the way is open to every variety of skilled labour.

I saw Uzbek women in the workrooms dealing most skilfully with the silk cocoons and silk threads. But I saw them, too, in the chemical laboratory, in the mechanical workshop, and in the management. A young Tajik woman, who could make herself quite well understood in Russian, took me through the various departments. Whenever we came to a new type of working bench, she demonstrated her newly acquired knowledge and technical skill. She had just passed through a mainly technical school and was getting her practical experience in the factory, in order to be admitted later to a special Technical College.

In the reeling department the women sat in a long row, young and old, in the pleasantest harmony, Uzbeks with dark, glowing eyes and dozens of black plaits according to the native fashion, beautiful Jewesses from Bukhara, Biblical figures with almond-shaped eyes and veiled fire in their glance, and among them short-haired, blonde, blue-eyed Europeans.

How and whence had they all come to this factory? Sulfi, the wife of a *dekhkan* or peasant in the Samarqand district told how, when news reached her *kishlak* of the opening of the factory and the call for women workers, she begged her husband fervently to allow her to go;

she even discarded her *paranja* beforehand and entered the factory, and then at once the *Komssomol*.

Julma, a lively creature with a garland of plaits beneath her silver-embroidered *tyuberyeika* said she was the daughter of reactionary parents who wanted to marry her against her will. Thanks to the intervention of the women's section in the factory it was possible to cancel the bargain at the last minute, and besides working in the factory she was now attending the school, for she wanted to continue her studies.

There were hundreds of such Sulfis and Julmas there. They all looked happy and well, and when I asked them how they liked the factory they replied in chorus: "Nothing will induce us to give it up for the *ichkaris*!" It is not difficult to comprehend that answer, when one remembers that no single Uzbek or Tajik woman ever possessed a farthing before. But now all who work in the factory are entirely independent economically of their fathers, brothers, and husbands, and as most of them belong to poor families, the earnings of wife or daughter are generally very welcome at home.

During free intervals in the factory, moreover, the workers can go to the cinema, or the reading-room, or the club, and take part in the various circles. And then the Red *Chaikhana*, the tea-room, where meetings and discussions are held half in the open air, offers plenty of variety. But meantime the small children are looked after in a little white house hidden among the foliage, where they can play and romp out-of-doors, and where they get their meals; and so it is really two generations who are growing into a new life here and becoming new human beings.

It is characteristic of the importance of women in Central Asian industry that the essential cotton and silk industries are definitely feminine trades. The workers in silkworm breeding are 80 per cent women in Tajikistan and 90 per cent in Uzbekistan. In former times there was hardly anything that could be called an industry.

There were no native women in the trades unions and all the urban women workers were, without exception, Europeans.

There was not a single Turkish woman in the oil industry of Baku in former days; in 1931 there were already 18,000, and some of them were even then working in the docks. *Milonova*, the best woman shock worker in the industry of Azerbaijan, is employed in the tenth compressor group in the Ilyich Bay in Baku where she competes in socialist rivalry with a brigade of male workers. Milonova has seven times been awarded a prize, and distinguished by the diploma of honour of the Oil Association for her remarkable exploits, and she by no means stands alone. There are a number of such Milonovas to-day among the Turkish women in the Baku oil works, and likewise a number of Eastern women who have risen from the lowest ranks to the position of instructress, like the best Georgian woman shock worker and inventor, *Shengelia*, in the silk mill in Tiflis. There were 1,946 women in the light industries of Uzbekistan in 1928 and 49 in the heavy industries. Within a few years these figures have risen to 8,000 and 700. It is noteworthy with what indefatigable zeal the women in the light industries labour to improve their qualifications. For several years they have formed the majority of semi-skilled workers in Uzbekistan. And in various parts of Central Asia there are definitely women's factories.

Thus the number of women workers in the largest textile mill in Central Asia, the Tashkent "Textile Kombinat," is 75 per cent, two thirds being native women, and the manager of the mill is a woman. In a large clothing factory in Tashkent 95 per cent of the workers are Uzbek women, and here, too, women occupy managerial positions. Whereas a large proportion of the workers formerly wore *paranjas*, there is no longer a single veiled woman in the concern. In the famous silk mill at Ferghana the number of women

employed, mostly natives, amounts to 98 per cent. Nearly 100,000 women are employed in the industries of Kazakhstan, and the majority are Kazakhs.

Finally, let me cite two examples to show how large a share women have in the industry of Transcaucasia. In the Federal Republic of Georgia 43 per cent of all industrial workers are women, and in the Federal Republic of Armenia as many as 92 per cent. And more and more women are entering the railway service. In the transport industry their number has already reached 10 per cent. The engine driver of the Tiflis-Moscow express is a woman, and another woman is station-master at Ganja in the Northern Caucasus.

There is nothing to equal the zeal of the working women of the Soviet East in their efforts to achieve good results and raise the level of production, except the activities of women in European Russia. Things that may be observed in Russia proper are again found in the national states. A large proportion of prize-winning shock workers are women, and their families are often very proud of them in these days.

The organization of HOME INDUSTRY, so important in the national states, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus, goes hand in hand with the growth of factories; these home industries vary from place to place, and include the making of felt and hand-woven silk, of beautifully embroidered *khalats*, *tyuberyeikas* and *susannehs*, wall hangings, and all kinds of woollen carpets, smooth as well as hand-knotted. Home industries and co-operatives are established everywhere; in Turkmenistan they already embrace 100,000 women, and in the co-operatives alone which carry on CARPET WEAVING there the number of women is already over 30,000.

The Turkman carpets, which are made both in Central Asia and in the Caucasus, principally in Azerbaijan, have always held the first place in the world market for their peculiar beauty, their great costliness, and the

unfading glow of their warm colouring, and they once took precedence even of the Persian carpets—in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—according to the experts, both chronologically and for their artistry and workmanship.

These Turkman carpets are exclusively the product of women's hands; as a product of civilization they are used for as many purposes in the lives of the nomad tribes wandering across the deserts as camels are as a product of nature; and it is those made by the Tekke women, the largest tribe, with the ancient pattern, "Gul Ssalor," Rose of Ssalor, that are accounted the most precious and celebrated, in their artistic as in all other qualities. "A woman who cannot weave a carpet does not deserve her food," says a Turkman proverb. And so in former times every Turkman bride had to bring at least one carpet of her own weaving and several *chuwals* (bags, which took the place of chests) as her contribution to the marriage. And the lovelier and more elaborate the carpets that a girl could weave, the more she could vary the pattern of the Rose of Ssalor, the higher was her value as a bride, the greater the price paid for her as a wife.

Although in these days the primitive conditions under which the work was formerly done are being gradually abolished, yet carpet weaving still requires great endurance and is very laborious and slow, even when several women of the family work at it together—the grandmother together with little girls of ten or eleven who play with their dolls elsewhere, but are here required to know the serious side of life very early. For every square metre of a Turkman carpet contains an average of two to three hundred thousand separate knots, which may be seen outside on the back; and in the case of the most costly, small, so-called praying mats the number is not infrequently increased to six or seven hundred thousand. Small wonder that a Turkman woman often managed to make hardly more than two

or two and a half square metres in the course of months, even when she sat bending over her loom in every moment of leisure, and ruined not only her eyes, but her general health, by breathing air filled with wool and dust. And so it was not uncommon to measure the good, old carpets of large size by the age of their makers: one carpet, one woman's life.

But not only is carpet weaving hard and wearisome work, it is also a highly developed art, created and fostered exclusively by women, "visual music," following, indeed, its innate laws of composition and colour and form, but hardly subject to ready-made routine and models. For the soul of an oriental carpet is less in its symmetry than in its harmony of colour and ornament; in this it differs from European work. And though every design, every combination of colour and form, has its own name, so that every weaver can describe a carpet in a few words, though there are fixed laws by which one particular colour can be placed beside another and can "uncover" or "open" it, though various craft secrets are handed down from generation to generation, from mother to daughter, yet carpet weaving is a kind of poetry of the Eastern woman. That is why some of the older Turkman women, in spite of their ignorance in other matters, have such perfect taste and colour rhythm, such a developed artistic sense, that we are justified in calling them artists in the truest, finest meaning of the word; and as such they are generally recognized and honoured. The weaving which is done by men as well in Tajikistan—an exception to the rule—never reaches the standard of these women's work.

An old Turkman carpet or a *yolan* (strip) is really the epic of the nomad woman, capturing her bare, monotonous life, with its hard work and its few joys, as the poetry of the soul in an abstract, terse, geometrical form, day by day and year by year. He who can interpret those colours, those conventionalized lines and figures,

may obtain some insight into the inner life of their creator, as the following quotation from *A. Gar* shows:

Over there, in the burning sand, something moves, comes nearer and nearer. It is a caravan bearing cotton. . . . And in a little black design on the carpet's border a caravan is drawn, a caravan slowly approaching: one camel after another, one camel after another.

In the late autumn, when the hoar-frost descends on the sand by night and the air is stiller than ever, you hear a melancholy cry in the sky; it is the cranes, holding their roll-call between north and south. . . .

Then gloom falls upon the Turkman woman's soul, and it rises in the form of sad, white birds and flies across the red border of the carpet.

When a Turkman woman has only one dry, black, flat loaf to still her own and her children's hunger, what dreams fill her rapt soul? Ah, of nothing but fat, fat sheep.

Her dreams are closely bound up with her design, and all of a sudden rams' horns appear as ornamentation in the carpet.

When spring approaches, and the Turkman girl is full of spring thoughts, she begins to knot a carpet with the Gul Ssalor. . . . Gul Ssalor is the six-sided rose of the Ssalors, and in it all maiden dreams are woven. . . .

When her son sets forth for a strange land, the mother says as she takes leave: "Oh, my son, take good care that your horse does not approach a yellow lizard, *sem-sem*."

"For it is an evil omen to approach a *sem-sem*, it means certain misfortune." And, as a warning, the mother weaves a border of lizards in her son's travelling bag.

If a *lailak*, a stork, builds a nest on the roof of the mosque or the house, it means "peace to the house and its neighbour, peace and joy." And the Turkman woman rejoices, and makes a pattern of circles and lines that she calls "*lailak*."

But if a Turkman woman is sad, if her husband has struck her or has taken away the money she earned and not even bought her a present with it, where shall she go with her grief, to whom open her heart? There is nobody. So the carpet alone knows of her tears which flow, ceaseless and bitter, to a little brook, gathering in a narrow streak, and then the Turkman woman says: "That is the Ssu Water."

But if a Turkman woman experiences some joy, if she hears news from the city of women's new life, how her heart exults, how her fingers dance over the pattern, how red her carpet glows.

In 1914 20,000 knotted carpets were exported from Turkmenia, over 16,000 *palasses* and 142,000 *kurshums* or saddle-cloths, representing an immense volume of women's labour, a vast achievement in every respect. Yet, although the demand in the world market for Turkman carpets was so enormous, the Tsarist Government left the weavers, scattered throughout the land, to starve for years on the few roubles they got for their hard work in the semi-darkness of their *yurtas*. Nay, more: in the exhibitions of carpets that were organized from time to time in those days, it was customary for portraits to be placed above the single show pieces, not of their makers, but of those makers' "lords": in accordance with tradition, of the juvenile son who appeared as the official salesman of his mother's work and ordinarily made the contracts with purchasers.

And so the miserable prices paid to the carpet weavers for their work drove them gradually to abandon the delicate, unfading vegetable native dyes, which were very costly because their preparation was so laborious, but which helped to make the fame of the carpets, and to substitute artificial aniline dyes that are not very durable. For this reason the Turkman carpet industry was deteriorating before the October Revolution, which certain interested circles even saw with satisfaction.

But now, since the Soviets came to power, as I have said, home industries and co-operatives are everywhere being established in Turkmenistan, and have united in a Turkman Carpet Association, to which over 30,000 Turkman women belong. These co-operatives, of which there were still only a few hundreds in 1926, started agitation among the Turkman women and a campaign of enlightenment concerning their new rights under the very eyes of the men, who watched them

aloof. Now efforts are continually being made to remove the women's work from the dark and dirty *yurtas* to light, airy rooms, to which, as always, various cultural activities are attached: circles for the liquidation of illiteracy, Red Reading Corners, children's crèches, medical consultations, wall newspapers, advice about employment, and so on. Tens of thousands of carpet weavers have already learnt to read and write. And at the carpet-weaving college established at Ashqabad at the end of 1931, with its hostel where more than a hundred Turkman women from the remotest deserts are housed so as to start work—deserts where not long ago the Women's Sections hardly dared to penetrate—women are gradually being trained as instructresses in the carpet-weaving industry, receiving a more general education during the first year of their apprenticeship.

In this way provision is made for the proper training of the rising generation in this branch of art; natural dyes are everywhere being used again and, thanks to the new systematic organization and to the immeasurable improvement in sanitary and hygienic conditions and in the general conditions of labour, not only the quality, but also the quantity, of carpet production shows a marked advance. In 1934, the year in which several Turkman carpet weavers, old and young, were given the title of "art workers" at a competition in Ashqabad, some 70,000 square metres of carpet were produced (about six times as much as in pre-revolutionary Turkmenia), and most of them had some 400,000 knots per square metre. One danger is that the patterns and designs which are now handed to the women *en masse* and are by no means always of the highest artistic quality, as so often happens when outsiders intervene in the free creative processes of folk art, may have an injurious effect upon the purely original inventiveness that is the living soul of the craft, nay, may in some cases cause it to wither altogether. Great caution is called for in this matter.

But, on the other hand, there is no disputing the immense cultural and intellectual influence of these co-operatives upon the women organized in them, whose fundamentally changed economic position makes them entirely new human beings, re-moulds them to a new self-confidence, and so raises their social sense from day to day. Eye-witnesses tell repeatedly of the crushing effect produced at first upon the men when the money advanced on the women's output, or their wages, were paid to themselves and not to their "lords," and how they said: "Never mind, we'll pocket the money afterwards, anyhow." But nowadays women's position even in the family has changed, thanks to their labour, and it now sometimes occurs that, when a woman is seated at work and her husband happens to have time, he makes the popular green tea for her with his own hands and keeps an eye on the children at the same time. Thus a great revolution in the family is taking place in the desert, and the women have become real rebels. Their carpets, which they used to weave in the semi-darkness of their *yurtas*, and to which they had hardly any right, are now not only leading them out of the gloom to a new light, but are helping them to win new rights.

Lenin's expectation that women, freed from illiteracy, organized in the economic life of the community, and drawn out of the narrow domestic circle, would play their part in politics, has been largely fulfilled in the East of the Union, as well as in Soviet Russia. At the first general conference of women in Moscow in 1923 there were five Turkman women, aged bodies who had been induced to come by means of promises. Two years later there were already two hundred delegates at the conference, which took place on March 8th, International Women's Day, and they included young women accompanied by their husbands. The importance of this conference in spreading a knowledge of women's new rights in the Soviet State must be accounted considerable. The conferences which have since then

been held every year on Women's Day in all centres within the Union serve as a measure of the further advance of women's emancipation, and of the growing participation of women in the public life of the national states. In recent years these conferences have swelled to real mass demonstrations, attended by thousands of delegates from the remotest parts of the Union, from far distant *auls* and *kishlaks*. They come with their husbands and children, often whole caravans full, to renew their witness to the laws of the women's movement and to bring forward wishes and complaints, to make abuses known, and to glorify or celebrate achievements.

At the end of 1935 there were special conferences for the girls, the *Komssomol* organizations, in more than twenty national territories. Their immediate cause was the reflection that propaganda and activity among women seemed to have slackened latterly. They gathered thousands of young women and girls from mountain *auls*, *kishlaks*, and all manner of *kolkhos* villages and gave a new impulse to the movement; throughout the Union they were welcomed and celebrated as a "new page in the many-volumed history of the masses of women among the nationalities."

A newspaper reporter from Uzbekistan wrote:

The first to appear at the conference was Nurmatova from the distant oasis of Khoresm. The *kolkhos* Yash Leninchi had presented her with a new pair of patent leather boots and a shimmering silk dress for the occasion. With her twenty-six elaborate plaits tucked beneath her festive *tyubetyeika*, Nurmatova entered the aeroplane Ant-9, and two hours later the five hundred kilometres between her *kolkhos* and the railway lay far behind her.

But not all the girls and women who attended the conference were as well cared for as Nurmatova. In Tashkent it was even rumoured that some of the delegates were to be dragged out of the train on the journey. "If we could at least collect five hundred delegates!" was the dream of the organizers of the Women's Youth Conference of Uzbekistan. But in actual fact six hundred and fifty delegates turned up, including four members of the Tsik,

three chairwomen of village Soviets, a number of chairwomen of *kolkhoses*, brigade commanders, and shock workers. . . .

The delegate from the Kaganovich District entered the conference hall. Her cheek bore the scar of a cut from a knife; she had come against her husband's will.

There was the delegate *komssomolka* Pirvasarova from Feighana. When she told her husband that she wanted to go to the conference and maintained her right, he gloomily reminded her of the proverb: "When the goat wants to slaughter itself, it begins to quarrel with the butcher." And ten delegates turned up aged from ten to twelve years—children in fact, and yet women already. They had been taken away from their husbands, to whom their parents had sold them.

A hundred and fifty women gave in their names as speakers. Some of them spoke in the name of five or six delegates, had never appeared in meetings before, and had only discarded their *paranjas* the day before the conference, or just when it opened.

All Uzbekistan listened to the words of these young women. From the lofty platform of their first republican conference they courageously criticized the work of the *Komssomol*, angrily censured the inactivity of certain judges who often countenanced *byt* crimes against women, and demanded severer punishment for those who gave girls in marriage that were still minors, ill-used their wives, or acted barbarously towards women in other ways.

But the speakers dealt with other matters, too. They reported, for instance, that "girls in Bukhara are very keen on parachuting," that seven hundred *komssomolkas* from Yangi Yul were attending agricultural courses, that a women's club was being opened in the District of Chust, that on the eve of the conference fifteen *kolkhos* women had laid aside their *paranjas*, and that *likbes* schools had been opened in twenty *kolkhoses* of Tangi Kurgan for *kolkhos* women.

The women's participation in elections and the number of women officials also advanced with giant strides. The women of the Soviet East have captured all posts, from those in the *aul* Soviets to the highest Government appointments, women as well as men fill all offices, and the significant thing is that here, too, the percentage of women is constantly rising. The village Soviets of Turkmenistan had only 3 per cent of women

members in 1926; by the very next year their number had doubled, and since then it has greatly multiplied. The percentage of women voters rose up to 1934 to above 60 per cent in the villages, and above 90 per cent in the towns. In Kazakhstan there were over 16,000 women members of Soviets in that year. At the second Club Conference at Baku in 1930 the number of chairwomen of village Soviets in the Soviet East was given as 1,500. In Uzbekistan in 1926 one quarter of all the members of the Soviets were women. In the following year the number of women elected to the village Soviets in the East was 48,000.

Moreover, the number of women in responsible posts is increasing. Even in 1930 the position of Vice-Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of Uzbekistan was occupied by a woman, and there were nine women members of the Committee. In 1935 no less than thirty-nine women, mainly mountaineers, were elected to the tenth Executive Committee of the Republic of Daghestan, and one of them was sent as the representative of Daghestan on the *Vtsik*. In Kazakhstan that same year there was a woman People's Commissary, and likewise in the Bashkir Republic. The part played by the emancipated women of the East in justice is noteworthy. For some years a woman has been President of the Supreme Court of Kazakhstan, whilst other Kazakh women are members of this final court of appeal in their Republic. Ever since 1925 there have been a number of Turkman and Uzbek women acting as People's Judges; in the Caucasus there are mountaineer women now acting as public prosecutors. Among the Cherkesses 40 per cent of those employed in the judicial service are women.

Women of the Soviet East have proved altogether satisfactory as public servants. Of course there was great opposition to overcome in this matter, for Eastern men who had grown up in a thoroughly patriarchal atmosphere were far less ready than Russians to recognize

women's fitness for high, or, indeed, the highest posts; they had to be forced to recognize it in the course of years by the women's indisputable services. Nowadays not only it is almost universally admitted that the women have proved their worth in the Soviet East, as in Central Russia, but it is specially emphasized that they regard their duties less bureaucratically than men. A Bashkir woman who was elected chairwoman of her *aul* Soviet after passing through a six months' course of training, replied, when she was asked whether she would find her way through all the papers: "Papers are never so important as people; I shall stick to them, and so shall certainly manage all right." This remark was published in all the newspapers in the Union; it is in keeping with the recent watchword of the regard to be paid to living humanity.

Taking it all in all, the participation of women in public affairs is a factor without which it is no longer possible to imagine the Soviet State, even in its Eastern territories, and so what Stalin said some little time ago is true of the national regions, too: "We must welcome the growing social activities of working women and their advance to positions of responsibility, as unmistakable signs of the growth of our civilization."

THE SPHERE OF WOMEN IN THE SOVIET EAST—YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY

IN THE LAND OF QUEEN TAMARA AND THE THE AIRWOMEN OF BAKU

THE PEACEFUL, SHINING DON IS LOVELY, AND THE WIDE expanse of steppe bordering it near Rostov at twilight, when the lamps are lit in the vault of heaven, still rosy gold with the last rays of the sun,³ and on the earth, veiled in flitting shadows; when the last notes of the lark in the sky fall silent, and the softest breath of wind caresses the grasses tenderly and alluringly as they bend to rest. There is a peculiar music, only heard by the throbbing heart, in the quiet air. From a neighbouring *soukko*s the rythmic clatter of a tractor, still at work somewhere, seems to come from another world; the two worlds that abut one another at this point are utterly different, and yet varied and full of movement. And if we did not prefer to bow in our thoughts in speechless worship before such a wealth of beauty, we might cry with *Gogol*: "The devil take thee, land of the steppes, how lovely thou art!"

At Rostov on the Don, the centre of the many-coloured, many-tongued Northern Caucasus, you only get a first foretaste of the Caucasus. For here there are no giant mountains, only steppes; but there are numbers of student representatives of the countless surrounding mountain peoples, who but lately had no written language, many "courses for mountaineer women" attended by some twenty nationalities, many frank and intelligent mountaineer women, with the typical

buoyant gait and, in spite of the hardness of their past lives, frequently a splendidly proud bearing. There are women from Daghestan, the land of mountains and the "Mountain of Tongues," who not long ago were on an equality with the mule, the *ishak*, in the domestic economy, and so rendered special services as porters in the transport of heavy provisions for the Tsarist troops. There are women who, a short time ago, were not allowed to wear cloaks, and there are women from the Kabard-Balkar Republic, that is from the autonomous territory inhabited by a formerly leading Cherkess people, who made great progress in industry, culture, and social institutions, especially with regard to women, under the leadership of Bethal Kalmykov, a name celebrated throughout the Union.

As everywhere in the Union, there are plenty of happy young people in Rostov on the Don, full of the joy of life, and one is struck by the number of kiosks selling newspapers, mineral waters, and scent. And in the principle street, the Ulitsa Friedrich'a Engels'a, there is such gaiety after midnight outside the cinemas that you imagine yourself somewhere in a piazza in southern Italy. And yet I saw even more kiosks selling scent, and an immense, gaily decked shop, a regular temple of perfumery, in Makhach Kala, the capital of Daghestan (formerly Petrovsk), where practically everybody that I met, man or woman, belonged to a different nation, but where it was plain that they all felt the same craving for pleasantly perfumed soap and the like products of the city.

The next place on the way to Tiflis, the capital of Georgia, or Grusinia, is Orjonikidze, formerly Vladikavkas, now the capital of the autonomous Republic of North Ossetia.

Hitherto the great Caucasus region was shut off from the world, with its hundred and fifty peaks up to 13,000 feet high, and over twenty higher than Mont Blanc. Only a single railway line crossed its western

spurs, from Armavir to Tuapse, on the Black Sea. The other routes from north to south are still fairly inconvenient and roundabout, with no through service. But there is already a project for remodelling nature in the Caucasian world of giant mountains. In more or less the same direction as that in which the old Grusinian military road still leads past Kazbek, a great tunnel is shortly to be constructed to penetrate what has hitherto been the mighty, impenetrable, natural barrier between East and West, the gigantic wall which some of the peoples of antiquity regarded as the end of the world.

Moreover, a new attack is being contemplated on Elbruz, the greatest of the Caucasian giants, the highest mountain on the frontier of Europe and Asia, of which a Kabard myth tells how, as mighty ruler of that world beyond the clouds, seated on his throne of ice, he summoned the infinite host of spirits from all the heights and the depths in order to resist the advancing armies of the Tsar. Here a cable railway nearly four miles in length is to be constructed and to connect its two peaks. More and more scientific stations, often under the direction of women, are being established on the mountain peaks. Mountain touring is increasing year by year. Daring climbs are undertaken every summer by Soviet Russian and foreign expeditions and Alpine climbers, sometimes first ascents. The native mountaineers are often positively panic-stricken at all these outrages, fearing the vengeance of the mountain spirits. But all the deities, who but yesterday were never so powerful and inexorable, seem now to have become feeble and irresolute. And so the myth of the tempestuous coming of the new era is ousting the legend of Prometheus' rebellion, and all the other ancient legends of the mountainous Caucasus that are still sung in countless variants by the aged bards, minstrels, and story-tellers on the banks of the angrily foaming rivers.

Outside the city of Orjonikidze the Grusinian military road begins, crossing the otherwise impenetrable mountain chain, the country's "backbone," to the south over the Gudaur Pass, the "Gateway of the Caucasus." During the snow-free summer months, if you take one of the mountain motor coaches in Orjonikidze that now run regularly, starting early in the morning, you soon reach the famous Terek Valley. And then a magnificent panorama spreads before you and grips you with its grandeur.

A new and glorious scene appears at almost every turn or clearing, a new world peopled by proud snow giants towering to the sky. White-capped Kazbek casts its shadow as it approaches. But we soon leave behind us the wild, stirring beauty of the Darial ravine and the legendary castle of Queen Tamara, of which Lermontov sang, and the unbelievably narrow road winds close to the banks of the raging Terek, whilst the rocky wall often towers higher than 6,000 feet, jagged and pinkish grey.

The sun stands high in the sky. The landscape is bathed in light, and towards midday we reach the Georgian village of Kazbek; we have reached the highest point of our journey. The mighty, shining, majestic pyramid of ice, of which you get a particularly good view at this point, and which has given its name to the village—over 16,000 feet high—rises, impressive and commanding, against a deep blue background. A magnificent view!

Here we take a short rest, and are immediately surrounded by a crowd of dark-eyed, brown-skinned children, looking like Italian *lazzaroni* who offer rock crystals for sale. We see becoming Persian caps with sharp edges, clear-cut masculine profiles, and wonderfully beautiful, well-grown women, Queen Tamaras every inch of them, that classical model for Georgian women. There is a smell of roast mutton, which is served in the open, crowded arbours of an adjoining garden,

with wine and greens. And you feel that you are surrounded on every side with living pictures by the painter Niko Pirossmanashvili, known beyond the bounds of Georgia, who, like so many of the Dutch painters, treats life as if it were an unceasing banquet.

Refreshed, we continue our journey, and again the views are constantly changing. Once again on the road snow-white Kazbek shows her mighty face, and the highest, ice-covered peaks of the Central Caucasus rise before us. There is snow on the road now, and we have reached the highest point of the pass, where there are yellow rhododendrons, blue gentians, and unknown Alpine flowers amongst the rocks. But a little on one side, also among the rocks, close to the edge of the ravine, the "flowers of the earth" are to be seen—children, romping children.

With arms stretched upwards and heads motionless, they are dancing a gliding dance, one with the markedly Caucasian rhythm that is in their blood, and as they dance they throw little nosegays as a graceful welcome to the passing travellers. Instead of begging for money, *kopeks*, they generally ask for paper, pencils, notebooks, and newspapers. Is not that marvellous? The one-time "brigand-infested wilderness," the desert, the region where formerly people hardly ventured without an escort, is now living its own life, breathing peacefully, and even producing its own, native art. The younger generation is seeking contact with the outer world.

The sharp descent to the south brings us into another river valley, that of the wild, foaming Aragva, inhabited solely by Georgian tribes. The *auls* cling to the rocky walls on all sides like giant swallows' nests, surrounded by green pastures and meadows. *Arbas*, waggons without shafts, each on two enormous, clumsy, wooden wheels, or, rather, discs that will hardly hold together, and drawn by ruminative buffaloes, jog along together with motor lorries carrying building materials; these become more and more frequent as we advance, for in

these parts they are building on an immense scale. Do not the buffalo waggons come direct from the Stone Age, or at least from the days of our forefather Noah? Indeed, here it is not far to go to Mount Ararat, though there are not so many doves flying over it as Soviet aeroplanes. From the side valleys emerge slender horsemen, with slim hips and small waists, in the customary Cherkess garb, adorned with arms and beautifully chased daggers in their girdles. There are women, too, high on horseback, riding astride, modern Amazons, sometimes with a child at the breast. But there are mounted figures, too, that seem to belong to the Middle Ages, in gay robes with embroidered crosses. They wear helmets and chain armour, armplates and breastplates of steel, shield and sword, and lance as well.

What people are these? Khevsurs. It was formerly said of the Khevsurs, and still is sometimes, that they are the descendants of the Crusaders, a statement that has still to be proved; the same is said of the Svanetians. Little study has yet been devoted to the Khevsurs; they are part heathen, part Christian, and have hitherto been entirely shut in by their mountains. At any rate they are a strange, warlike, chivalrous people, fanatically truth-loving, mainly living in gentile organization, free, and treasuring their freedom and the law of vendetta above everything on earth; they are a marvel to the Georgians themselves, and very miracles are narrated of them in Tiflis.

My Caucasian travelling companion, who has a friend that is a Khevsur and a *komsomolats*, quoted the youth's words to me, words that he had often heard from his father, who, in turn, had had them impressed upon him by his own father: all men on earth are really born princes; it is impossible for one to be a prince over princes, or a Tsar, so that nobody has the right to rule over others.

Nowadays more and more Khevsurs are descending from their hitherto barely accessible *auls*, from a yet

living past that sometimes still retained a tinge of matriarchy, down into the valleys. The women who used, as I have said, to bring their children into the world in a *ssamrevulo*, a kind of dog kennel, outside all human habitation, alone, and lying on the icy ground, now go more and more to maternity institutions and hospitals, and learn the use of soap. Illiteracy has practically disappeared, and there are even Khevsurs who attend the Workers' Faculty in Tiflis. And so this world, that had remained stationary for a thousand years, is gradually breaking loose from its snow peaks and taking its place in the new life.

But meanwhile the Khevsur horsemen have disappeared. The sun is getting low, and where the Aragva is joined in a wonderful embrace with its mother, the Kura, you see a fairy-tale dating from pre-Christian days on the strip of land between them. It is the ancient city of Mtskheta, once the capital of Georgia, the cradle of its three-thousand-year-old civilization—together with the Armenian the oldest in the company of states within the Union—a place where many threads mingle and cross from East and West, and also the field of activity of Saint Nino, Georgia's patron saint. At the present day it is a unique museum of ancient Georgian church architecture.

An hour later, when darkness is falling, we have covered some hundred and forty miles successfully since we left Orjonikidze, we enter Tiflis, the capital of the Republic of Georgia, enriched by a whole world of new impressions, and we are already in Transcaucasia, that is to say beyond the bounds of Europe.

In the Hotel Orient, where strangers generally stay in TIFLIS, you could until recently enjoy a beautiful view, in the morning, at midday, and in the evening, of St. David's mountain opposite, where there is a monastery of the same name with a miraculous spring that is particularly favoured by childless women, the tomb of

the Russian poet Griboyedov, and, rather lower down, a little church built in the typical old Georgian style and dominating the neighbourhood, rising aloft, an old-time distinctive feature of the town, and, indeed, of the whole countryside. Now the view is spoilt by a row of large new state buildings. But if you ascend the mountain by the mountain railway, you get a fine panorama of the whole town which has two separate quarters, as almost everywhere in the East, one old and Asiatic, and the other new and European.

The Asiatic quarter is grouped round the proud fortress of Mtekh, rising on a picturesque rock from the banks of the Kura, and round the celebrated hot sulphur springs that have bubbled from time immemorial out of the rocky basin in which the town has lain for fifteen hundred years and which gave it its name; Tiflis is the Georgian word *iflisi*, the warm town. Here are the popular baths, visited by enormous numbers of people. And whilst you wait for a cell in the crowded ante-room of the women's section, and hear Armenian, Turkish, Georgian, Kurdish, Arabic, Persian, and Russian spoken all around you, you not only have the opportunity to study all the types in the country, but also begin to realize how much more important may be the part played by such baths further east, where they were almost the only meeting-place for the native women, the actual forerunners of the women's clubs of to-day.

There is hardly anywhere else in the Soviet East where you still feel the shock of East meeting West so strongly as in the gay, sunny town of Tiflis, the most important cultural centre in the Caucasus, the seat of a number of scientific institutes with scientists and scholars of international reputation, who are now engaged in exploring and studying their country with the utmost zeal, investigating its peoples, its languages, in short, Caucasology. On one side is the old city, a labyrinth of narrow, winding alleys, uphill and downhill, a con-

fused medley of low houses, balconies, open galleries, bazaars, workshops, and stalls, where, until recently, not only all the Caucasian tribes and nationalities, but those of the neighbouring Asiatic lands, offered the strangest wares for sale, and still do to some extent. It is the most variegated throng of human types, colours, garbs, and dialects, a very Babel of peoples and tongues. And on the other, European, side there is in the centre the wide, imposing Rustavelli Prospect, as straight as a die, with the State Opera House, the theatres, libraries, museums, monuments, and scientific institutes, and the best shops, and round about them the modern quarter.

Until a few years ago these two quarters were fairly sharply separated, although occasionally a camel caravan from Asia strayed into Europe, or the Kurd soothsayers and porters, and the "artists in shoe-polishing," the Aisors, as well as other Orientals, offered their services outside the great glass windows. Now these two worlds are united, not only symbolically by the tablet of honour, as high as the houses, at the beginning of the Rustavelli Prospect, on which are graven the names of the new heroes and heroines of labour in letters of gold; now there are new libraries on both sides, Red Corners, co-operatives, motor clubs, wireless clubs, and women's clubs. And the town near which Saint Nino once roamed with her cross of vine branches, and where the immortal Queen Tamara once ruled over mountains and seas, and over the hearts of poets and warriors, is now dominated by the bustle of modern business; everywhere you meet responsible women officials of the Soviets with the utmost variety of duties.

From Tiflis you can travel by rail in two opposite directions, and on each side you come to the open sea. Going west you reach the southernmost corner of the Black Sea, passing through the Georgian province of Mingrelia, the Colchis of antiquity, once famed for the Golden Fleece, now for the largest hydro-electric power

station in the Caucasus, the Riongess. Here, in BATUM, the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan, one of the loveliest towns in the Union, we are already in a sub-tropical climate, in the midst of a vast, boundless orchard and vineyard, surrounded by mountains that are eternally green and covered with tropical vegetation; yet at the same time it offers us a view of the snow peaks of the great Caucasian chain, towering and glittering in the distance.

Not only is tea grown here, but oranges ripen, and there are eucalyptus trees and Australian and New Zealand plants. You wander along the shore in the shade of palm alleys and admire the Japanese mimosa, and near the town are thickets of wild bamboo. It is the veriest Paradise upon earth. But the women that you meet in this Paradise are nowise naked, indeed their faces are still sometimes covered with a veil. For the inhabitants of the town are mainly Georgians who profess Islam, Ajars, though there are also a number of Greeks, Turks, and Armenians. In the neighbourhood of Batum, on the picturesquely situated Selyoniy Myss (Green Cape) there is a large Botanical Garden, unique in that practically all the rare plants from all five continents flourish there in the open air, thanks to the help of the sea and the Caucasus Mountains.

And Batum, the port of the Black Sea Riviera, has another marvel which is, indeed, invisible because it is not on the earth but underneath it; that is the oil harbour behind the Mole, directly connected by a pipe-line more than 560 miles long with Baku, the other oil town situated east of Tiflis on the Caspian Sea, in a wholly different world.

BAKU in long past centuries was the city of the "sacred fire," the city of fire worshippers, whither the pious Parsees from Persia and India and the Brahman priests undertook pilgrimages. In Tsarist days it was the city of the many oil magnates, mainly foreign, and also the

city, not only of ever-burning flames, but also of ever-burning tempers, the city of revolt, of perpetual labour riots and risings. To-day Baku is the capital of the Azerbaijan Turks, who are a cross between the original Persian and the immigrant Turkish population, it is the queen of the oil region of the Soviet Union, and one of the most interesting and stirring towns in the world.

Surrounded by sandy deserts and sun-browned steppes, close to the seashore, the mass of houses slopes upwards like an amphitheatre, divided once again into two main halves. But whereas the old town of the Georgian capital can only be described as the threshold of the East, that of the Republic of Azerbaijan, with its characteristic fortified walls and its various mosques and minarets, is already the great portico of Central Asia. What is often merely hinted at in the former, appears fully developed in the latter. But this, indeed, is on the background of an industrial centre of world importance, of which someone once said that it is Europe, Asia, and America in one. All this produces a picture that is, in some ways, quite fantastic.

A *cheruodar* or caravan driver dressed in camel skin and so looking himself like a camel, one of the inhabitants of Azerbaijan who are still half or wholly nomad, still walks to-day silently and swiftly through the winding narrow alleys of the old fortified town at the head of his leisurely desert squadron as his forbears did a thousand years ago, though the sight is becoming steadily rarer. Occasionally you see him standing still, as if under a spell, at some cross-roads. His faithful companions lay their heads together in surprise; from their outstretched necks little bells dangle with a faint, worn tinkle that belongs to another world and age. Whence comes, they wonder, the clangour, piercing the air so imperiously, of the "house" on wheels that rushes past without even a horse to draw it (it is the electric tram)? It is a marvellous town, this Kube on the sea, the city of

the "Black Wind," the same that blows out in the desert.

It is not a hundred years since the last worshippers of Zoroaster fell silent in the fire temple Surakhani, close to Baku, that is still standing, and since the last sacred flame was extinguished on the god's altar. Since then the energy of the sacred fire has been more and more captured by motors and set in motion, and now it is no longer the feeble rays of a paraffin lamp that light Baku and its surroundings in the evenings, but every day, when darkness falls, thousands of little suns are lit between heaven and earth.

It is not twenty years since the deep gulf was bridged between those who lived in unhealthy mass dwellings, always hungry, always menaced by the spectre of an even more unhappy morrow, and the lords of the earth, living in gorgeous palaces. And therewith an end was made of the national and religious hatred between the native Turks and the other peoples settled there, especially the Armenians, a hatred which the Tsar's agents had perpetually fanned, and which had taken the place of the former everlasting fire of the priests. Now the palaces are homes for children and others, or cultural institutions. In one of these palaces is the famous Women's Club of Baku, with three thousand student members among the Turks and other Mohammedan women; a few years ago they might not uncover their faces, nor leave the house without their husbands' leave, nor be in any sense human. And the club committee, united and energetic in its resistance to such treatment of the Islamic women of Azerbaijan, is composed of a dozen vigorous and highly intelligent women, each one almost of a different nationality. In former days they could not have got on together for a single day.

Some of the women who are studying in this club, or in the numerous schools of various grades, teachers' colleges, courses, technical institutes, and conservatories that are open to them, the majority of working-class

origin, are already living in the fine new workers' colonies and garden suburbs laid out in several areas outside the town. They have broad, concrete-paved streets, water laid on, drainage, and playgrounds for the children. Most of the houses are bungalows so as to be safer from the terrible winds, and they have their own terraces, leading to a flower garden. Here Turkish families live peaceably next to Armenians and Russians, and the children are brought up together. Others still live in the old town which stretches down to the sea, with its endless fortifications adorned with wise sayings from the *Koran*; the fortifications date from the twelfth century, and were restored by the great Persian conqueror, Shah Abbas, in the seventeenth, but the town itself is much older.

Only a century ago the whole town of Baku lay within these walls. Nowadays, besides the once splendid castle of the former Khans of Baku, they contain the famous Virgin Tower, so called in honour of a Persian princess who once lived here and was the first woman in Baku to rebel against the custom of the country; she refused to marry her widowed father and made her consent depend upon the building of a giant tower, hoping that her impious wooer would not live to see it finished. But when the tower was completed, in spite of all difficulties, the virgin threw herself from its battlements into the Caspian Sea, which beat upon its walls in those days, and still did until about half a century ago; now, however, it is some distance away.

Thus the Caspian Sea, which is really a large lake, the largest in the world, recedes before the new town and the new age. For now they are systematically boring into the sea bottom and raising it to the surface, together with its fatty, oily contents, just as they are doing with the Zuider Zee in Holland. In 1920 the whole Ilyich Bay was reclaimed from the Caspian Sea in this way. And so the black forest of tapering oil derricks, the characteristic feature of the oil city of Baku,

which formerly only covered the earth all along the north-west shore, now rises from the water right out to sea.

I made a tour of the city and its surroundings, which are for the most part bare and sun-browned, accompanied by several committee members of the Women's Club. In the old town we drove through the Street of the Liberated Turkish Woman (formerly Veil Street), through Asiatic Street, through the Street of the Peoples of the East, which is already half pulled down as a preliminary to rebuilding, but still as busy as an anthill, and through the adjoining quarters, not only of the native Turks, but also of the Persians, Kurds, Armenians, Georgians, Greeks, Lesghians, and Caucasian Mountain Jews. Here the whole mosaic of Caucasian peoples, their whole life, is laid bare and spread out in the streets of this "southern Italy of the East," as it is in old Tiflis; you can read it like an open book. There are children, and again children, adults of all ages, sheep, camels, *ishaks*, all in a gay medley. In wretched shops still more wretched wares are the objects of bargaining and haggling. Beauties, still partly veiled, are offered the most sought-after specialties in the way of oriental cosmetics. There is a smell of onions and garlic and the like culinary delights, of tobacco and hashish and unwashed bodies. One is constantly coming upon little *chaikhanas*, like open halls, the cafés of Asia, where dark-skinned, dark-eyed figures sit cross-legged on dirty, dusty, but sometimes costly old carpets in a wonderfully dignified and truly oriental posture—who is there here that is not dignified?—and slowly sip their tea.

Here already is something similar to what we are to see later in Tashkent, Samarqand, Bukhara, and generally in Central Asia. And we see here just the same last palpitations of a world that is dying finally and at the same time awaking to a new life, a world that is being forcibly shaken from the very skies by propellers that are daily increasing in number.

We continue our journey. We alight to visit some

Turkish women with whom I am already acquainted in neighbouring *kishlaks*, the villages where, in spite of the clubs and other cultural institutions, you still see a great many idle men and only a few women, generally swathed in white; these latter are either busy with their household work or, nowadays, often employed in the town. The dwelling houses of the native population strike one as like many of the women; they, too, are for the most part covered, they are hidden behind high, blank walls without windows, and from the outside you never really know what they look like.

But if you knock, and the flitting shadows behind the walls satisfy themselves that it is not a strange man asking admittance, you find yourself at first in a typically oriental courtyard, surrounded on three sides by a narrow, open veranda, and with a tiny garden in the middle, or, more correctly, three apple or almond trees. The lower storey has no windows. And once again we realize that these dark, impenetrable walls, this little courtyard, the long veranda, the three languishing little trees, and a scrap of blue sky above—this formerly made up the whole world of these women. This was the scene of all their joys and sorrows, into this space everything was crowded that filled their sad lives between birth and death, lives that were without aspirations, without merry laughter, without any intellectual flights.

"The world is the man's home and the home is the woman's world," used to be said all over the wide Islamic East, or, still more inhumanly and inexorably: "A woman's life leads from the living-room to the hearth, from the hearth to her ablutions, and from her ablutions to the grave."

How far a road has been travelled from that yesterday to this to-day!

That evening I was invited to a *ssamovarnik* in the Women's Club, or rather, the Cultural Palace of Emancipated Turkish Womanhood, to celebrate the fifteenth

anniversary of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which has since been promoted to the status of a Federal Republic.

In a large hall, festively decked with red flags and portraits of the leaders, round a long table covered with a white cloth, were the whole committee of the club, consisting entirely of women, and also the teaching staff, which now includes a number of men. In adjoining rooms were a great many guests, some of whom had come from a distance, among them the various delegations from Transcaucasian and other Soviet Republics and Regions, that were staying in Baku for the festival. There must have been several hundred persons, not only of all ages, but also, as always here, of all nationalities and confessions: Turks, Armenians, Tats, Russians, Tatars, Caucasians from the north and south, Mohammedans, Christians, and Jews. Tea was handed round from an immense *samovar* (hence the name, *ssamovarnik*); plates of fruit and sweetmeats stood on the table, and at the same time garnished meat dishes were offered. But people talked much more than they eat.

They talked of the many representatives of formerly oppressed peoples in Azerbaijan, some of them nomad and backward and almost unknown, who had come to Baku to celebrate the festival of their liberation, and of the many able emancipated women among them, some already celebrated for their achievements. They talked of the vast, new, magnificent park, the "Park of Culture and Recreation," recently laid out in the form of a broad girdle all round the big town rising from the shores of the Caspian Sea; formerly there was hardly any vegetation there, and never any shade; and now, almost in a single night, it has been turned into a luxuriant, green, garden city. But the chief subject of conversation was the "Olympiad of original artistic activity of the peoples of Azerbaijan," opened on the previous day, to which the best minstrels, dancers, musicians, storytellers, and folk poets had been sent in their splendid, richly coloured national garb, equipped, of course,

with their native instruments, from every part of the Republic; they came from the remotest corners of Nagorni Karabakh, and Kurdistan, from Lenkoran and other districts bordering on Persia, where wild boars and tigers are still found on the thickly wooded hills, from the rice-fields in various districts, from vineyards and cotton *kolkhoses*. It was a unique, living museum of Transcaucasian folk-lore, full of colour and fire and force; even aged men and women, and children, displayed physical dexterity, agility, and grace, a sense of music and rhythm, side by side with young people bubbling over, nay, intoxicated with life, so that I never ceased to marvel. And then there were the *ashughs*, the troubadours who still survive in the Caucasus, the home of poetry and song, the land where in olden days the poets rode at the head of the armies into battle. They recited their ancient ballads to music, together with the latest Soviet improvisations, and held contests that seemed to belong to the Middle Ages.

And finally people talked of how enthusiastically the enormous crowds at the Olympiad had applauded the youthful female orchestra of the Cultural Palace of Emancipated Turkish Womanhood; this orchestra consists of about fifty young and charming Turkish girls—in the old days women were never allowed to appear on the stage; they produce the most complex native tunes and melodies on their simple stringed instruments, quite simply and as a matter of course, and have their own soloists and singers. This fine body of women made a strong impression on me, even from a purely external point of view. In their national, Turko-Azerbaijan silk dresses, in shades of pale blue and orange, dull white and violet, above which rose beautiful, dark heads, generally very expressive, with sparkling, starry eyes, the whole company of women are like a lovely wreath of freshly opened roses when the curtain rises. And then the strange music, the songs that grip your heart! No wonder they talk proudly of them in the

Women's Club. There was also plenty of laughter, the guests were in a good humour, and I was overwhelmed with questions about Europe and women's position in the West.

There were gathered together pretty well all the women in Baku who had not only worked to build up the Club from the first, but had struggled, and sometimes bled, for the idea that it served in earlier days. Some of the leaders of the many branch clubs elsewhere, women who generally looked older than they actually were, told me how women were playing an increasingly important part in the social, economic, and cultural constructive work of their country even in the small towns in Azerbaijan, and everywhere in the country, especially in the *kolkhoses*. But they told me their own sad life stories, too, which almost always began with their being sold to an old man at the age of ten or twelve, whom they served as "third" or "fourth" pleasure, in consequence of their tender age. All of them had much, very much, to tell.

It is shocking to hear what these poor creatures had formerly to suffer, in body and soul, and deeply moving to learn how, after the Revolution, they managed to free themselves at a stroke more or less from all their humiliations and torments. One of these women told me how, after the death of her father and her elder sister, her only protectors, she was made to marry her brother-in-law of fifty-four, she herself being twelve. She had resolved to drench herself with paraffin and burn herself to death—a form of suicide formerly very common among the women of Azerbaijan, the land of petroleum—but after all she stayed with the man and bore him three children. When she was twenty-five she laid aside the veil and obtained a divorce. Since then she has not only learnt to read and write, but is now head of a model school and teaching a group of fifty children. Another woman told how at the age of thirteen she had married a man of fifty-five, and she added: "And if it had been the devil

himself who wanted to shut the door behind him in the night, we could have done nothing." This woman is still living with her husband. When I asked why she, who had cast off the veil and the yoke, had not also abandoned the old man, she answered with a melancholy smile: "Because my husband is now an invalid and we Turkish women are still so intimidated that we simply have not strength enough for all the new demands that life makes upon us. How can I leave the helpless old man?" But her daughter, who is now twenty and has a post in the law courts, has just married a man of twenty-four, and for love.

In an adjoining room in the club I turned to another, larger group. They were women in highly skilled trades, who are, of course, more numerous in this first-class centre of world industry than elsewhere, and some of them were the pride, not only of the Women's Club in Baku, but of the whole Federal Republic of Azerbaijan, and known throughout the Soviet Union.

I had just made the acquaintance of all the factory manageresses, oil engineers, airwomen, public prosecutors, and other high women officials present at the celebration, at a festive meeting of the club. At this meeting they spoke in a crowded hall of the immense significance and the meaning of the last fifteen years for their country to an audience consisting of hundreds of women of all ages who listened, devoutly and rapturously and with flaming eyes, to their no less flaming words. Everywhere in the East one is struck with the women's wonderful eloquence, though only yesterday they might not open their mouths; they can capture not only their fellow women, but often men as well. It seems as though the gathered energy that has been forcibly suppressed for centuries, the inward powers, stirred to life in a single night, were now finding expression in an immense urge to be up and doing, striking out new, original paths, in part with new words.

"I will not admit any woman in Azerbaijan to be

more than fifteen years old to-day!" cried *Kemal Ragimova*, the OIL ENGINEER whom I have already mentioned in another connection, in a ringing voice at this meeting of women. She is very much looked up to and has several times received distinctions, and, although she herself is now thirty-eight, she has more right than most to rejuvenate herself like that. For when she was thirteen they drew the veil, the *chadra*, over a head that was, I suppose, hardly less energetic and resolute than it is to-day, and at fifteen she was not only married to a man who happened to be of good character, but already a mother. Seen through the eyes of former days, that meant buried alive almost as soon as her bloom appeared.

But then, when a totally new age dawned for the women of the East, *Kemal Ragimova* was one of the first Turkish women to declare ruthless war on the old customs and ideas, though she still wore a veil, and to start propaganda and agitation, fanatically and passionately, among her sisters, in spite of all the dangers that menaced her from their husbands. In 1926 she finally laid aside the *chadra*, the veil, and broke with her whole past; she began to study, and later on, although she had meantime become a widow with four children, she was able to follow a full university course with state assistance. And when at the age of thirty-six she passed the engineers' diploma examination at the same time as four other Turkish women at the Transcaucasian Academy of the Oil Industry, her eldest daughter, who was twenty and might have been taken for her mother's youthful friend, was halfway through her medical course. "People used lightly to believe in miracles," *Ragimova* almost shouted at the end of her short but fiery address; "if I had said in those days that I should become an engineer, they would have dragged me to an asylum. But to-day—look at me!—the miracle has been performed."

Leila Mahmedbekova, the FIRST AIRWOMAN in Azerbaijan, who, unlike the previous speaker, is very womanly

and delicate, but supported by what seems to be some inner, hidden force, some strong impulse, and who spoke in the name of the airwomen of Baku, has been married to a former compositor since 1924, but in 1928 she was still wearing the veil and was the mother of two children when she gave up domestic work, went to school, and exchanged the *chadra* for an airwoman's helmet. Now she is sometimes busy from four o'clock in the morning till ten at night ; at seed-time and harvest she flies to the *kolkhoses* ; in winter she is not nearly so busy. She now teaches men to fly, and they think a great deal of her. She only sees her growing children when she goes home, or at the aerodrome, where she either withdraws with them to the rest room or takes them with her in the aeroplane. She told me with maternal pride how gifted and clever both the girl and the boy are, and showed me their photographs, and later, when we parted, she added hurriedly : " And in the evenings I study, especially German and French. So I shall soon be able to talk to our foreign guests in their own language."

Meanwhile, in Baku a whole generation of younger airwomen and parachutists have followed in the footsteps of Mahmedbekova, the first airwoman in Azerbaijan. It is remarkable how many Eastern women are crowding into that profession. It would almost seem as if, after they have burst through all their former fetters and prison walls, these women were growing wings, as if the earth were no longer enough, and they wanted to storm Heaven, and were indeed storming it.

First and foremost there is *Suleika Sseid Mahmedova*, a lovely girl of nineteen with an elegant figure, prettily dressed, with short hair, red manicured fingernails, and a saucy expression ; not only is she the first Turkish—or, indeed, Transcaucasian—PARACHUTIST, but also a student at the Petroleum Institute, and in three months she will be a MINING ENGINEER, and—oh miracle of the new age !—she is still unmarried. In former days

such a Suleika, who seems to have come straight out of *The Arabian Nights*, would either have been the favourite wife of an old and rich *bey* for the past half-dozen years, or at least the mother of four children. But this Suleika is in no hurry to marry. "First I must finish at the Institute. You see I'm at the aerodrome all day and busy studying in the evenings. It was only in the past that people used to marry so early. That's why my mother must make haste to retrieve all that she has missed in life, stimulated by my example. So she, too, has laid aside the *chadra* and is learning a lot, and she wants to be an engineer like me. But I find time to go to the opera and the theatre and the comedy, I go in for athletics a great deal, and I like the circus, and I go to work as I would to a festival."

With this Suleika, the latest Scheherezade of the East, the thousand and second Arabian Night begins in very truth.

And now it was said that the delegates from Georgia and Armenia wanted to speak to those present in the name of their peoples. There was an exchange of friendly words between the official and unofficial representatives of nations which were formerly the bitterest enemies, and some were addressed to individual guests. Animation increased, everybody had something to say, and at the end an Armenian composer, one of the guests, rose ; he was a man with a fine, slightly grey head, and he helped the Women's Club as musical adviser. He put into words what was in his own and all other minds at the moment : "I have lived in Azerbaijan for many years, but formerly I never made the acquaintance of Turks and took care to avoid them. But what a difference in the last fifteen years ! The barrier that separated us all has fallen once and for all. Nowadays the Turkish children smile at me with as much friendliness as the Armenian children, women are sitting here side by side with men, and may this Palace of Culture not only come

to be the gateway to culture for the whole East, but attract the attention of Western Europe."

Beside me sat *Gulyara Kadyrbekova*, the "directress" of the Baku Women's Club, well known to the women of the Soviet East even beyond the bounds of Azerbaijan, energetic and clever, prudent and wide-minded, the editor of the much read women's paper *Shark Kadyny* (The Woman of the East). These two positions make her in fact the teacher, leader, and chief of staff of the whole army of women in her country. She is a light-eyed, fair-skinned Turk, a great rarity, with a delicately cut, almost classical profile, a high, open brow, and beautifully marked eye-brows, a lovely woman of about thirty, a typical Soviet woman in her whole character and bearing. Of course her life story sounds most improbable to any Western European, and of course she is overburdened with so much work that she has not a moment for her private life ; that is the case with all responsible workers in the Soviet Union, who labour from early morning till late at night, whether it is a week-day or a "day out". She was sold almost as a child to an old man, but ran away from him later, and when I once asked her whether she would try again to build up a personal life for herself, young and womanly and attractive as she is, she answered with a laugh : "I have no time for that."

But on that evening she was unrecognizable ; I have never seen her in such exuberant spirits, so merry. And it was she who clamoured for the dancing to begin. Yes, dancing ! I had been looking forward to it all the time. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the dances were such as would have been seen on any similar Western European, or even purely Russian, occasion. What use had these primitive, thoroughbred people for dances artificially elaborated on the parquet floors of big cities, or in an utterly alien, foreign atmosphere, emasculated, Bowdlerized dances ? With some of them, with many Caucasian tribes, for instance, agility, swift and daring horsemanship, warlike athletic contests,

boldness, bravery, and courage are still regarded as the supreme virtues, most worth cultivating. And with some, as is often the case with Orientals, dancing still produces a kind of religious ecstasy, so that they feel themselves rapt to an utterly different world. Ah, no. They only danced national dances, dances of the Caucasian and Eastern peoples. What dances they were, and *how* they were danced !

Already the guests in the adjoining rooms had formed a circle in their midst. Already a native trio of *tara*, *kemancha*, and *tep* (originally Persian instruments) was filling the rather heated air with shrill and piercing notes, rhythmically monotonous. Already the audience, who were by no means content to be mere onlookers, but played an active part, were beating time by clapping their hands. And already several men and women, single or in pairs, were fervently engaged in performing various dances. They began with a Turkish national dance which lasts two hours, if it is performed in full, but was abbreviated on this occasion. Then two men danced a very amusing caricature dance, producing their comic effects chiefly by the movements of their first fingers. It was all light and buoyant, and yet tense.

But then a Georgian delegate came forward, a young woman student, and began to dance a special Caucasian dance, first slowly and then increasing the pace, her arms outstretched and raised, and dropping from time to time like the beat of wings. And it really was not dancing, but the floating of a delicate, transparent, golden-white cloud, the flow and trickle of a crystal mountain stream with its source in the highest snow regions, or the visible opening of a lovely wild flower, bending towards the sun across an abyss. But here it was the signal for a general, almost elemental, outburst of dancing.

For now, in addition to the daughter of Georgia in her fragrant, light, tulle robe, a young Armenian began a native mountain dance ; she was dressed in her national

garb, also embroidered in silver, and she looked dark beside the Georgian. Then an almost girlish-looking young man rose behind the two, and danced in circles, fiery and wild, yet delicate and buoyant in the growing whirl; he was like a kingly young eagle, suddenly darting upwards from his high, inaccessible rocks on his first skiey flight, and he, too, wore a becoming white garb, close-fitting and likewise bordered with silver. As slender as a wand, as light as a feather, hardly touching the ground, he seemed to soar in the air in his tall, soft boots. Faster and faster grew the music and the time beaten by the general clapping, more tense the atmosphere, and louder the applause of the onlookers. Already the dancer was in an ecstasy, now wavering, self-intoxicated, now with a proudly noble, ardent wooing when he tossed his head defiantly in the gigantic fur cap. Then again he seemed to beg and plead when he dropped chivalrously and humbly on one knee before the girl who evaded him saucily. All of a sudden his wooing took another character. In what seemed like a mad gallop he performed a variety of the most daring turns, then fought bravely like a hero, died like a wounded man whom a bullet has struck fatally in the heart, and finally withdrew victorious, as pale as death and wholly exhausted.

There was general jubilation and tempestuous applause. The audience were swept off their feet, all eyes were flaming, and the three musicians could do no more.

So there was a short pause, during which a young and charming Turkish girl was to sing a song. Her face half hidden by her tambourine, which she struck from time to time, she "sang" a Turkish melody dreamily, with closed eyes, but it was not at all like a song in the Western European sense. Rather it was a heart-rending lament, a suppressed sobbing and moaning, the cry of thousands of years of suffering, revealed in sad and melancholy notes, now short and sharp, now long-drawn-out, sometimes low and soft, sometimes loud; it was as desolate and boundless as the surrounding

desert, as bottomless and inexhaustible as the Caspian Sea outside. The *tara*, whose strings accompanied this sorrow-stricken melody, united all the time with the human voice in its sobbing and weeping, and the audience, in whose souls it probably struck a deep and hidden chord, seemed ready to listen to the music all night.

But another, older woman summoned the audience to the dance again, this time to the concertina; she had markedly Oriental features and a large white kerchief over her head, and I was told that she was one of the judges of the People's Court. And now it really was pandemonium. Everyone had to dance. Nobody was excused. Each one as best he could and whatever he could.

And so they all danced in a medley: the President of the Club, almost all the committee members, the majority of the teachers, airwomen, directresses, women kommissars for popular enlightenment, women public prosecutors of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the delegates from abroad, all the technical and kitchen staff, down to the last charwoman and lavatory attendant, men and women, young and old. One or two Russians present, who knew nothing else, danced the familiar *kamarinskaya*, and I myself was not excused, although I had not danced since the War and never could dance anything but a Viennese waltz. No excuse was accepted, and whether I would or no I had to murder the Caucasian rhythm to the best of my ability, with the Armenian musician as a partner.

Is there anywhere in the whole world where you would find such a laboratory of rejuvenation? "Tell them in Europe," said one of the women to me on parting, "how we work here, and how we can enjoy ourselves at the same time."

THE NEW ASPECT OF ANCIENT TURKISTAN

Between two and three thousand miles from Moscow, divided from it by broad rivers and long mountain

ranges, great lakes, boundless steppes, and burning deserts, lies the city of TASHKENT in a lovely green oasis.

Formerly it was the remote, provincial seat of the Governor General of the Tsarist colony of TURKISTAN, the most exotic colony of the Russian empire. To-day it is the flourishing capital of the Federal Republic of Uzbekistan, its largest administrative, economic, and cultural centre, the MOSCOW OF CENTRAL ASIA.

Formerly it was inhabited, but for the Russian colonists, only by "aliens" known as Sarts, a name which has many meanings but is in any case a term of contempt, one of the meanings being "yellow dogs." To-day they call themselves Uzbeks, which means "lords of themselves." But there are in Tashkent, in addition to this indigenous race, a good many Tajiks, Kirghizes, Bukhara Jews, and of course Russians, besides a number of former German and Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war, of whom there are said to be tens of thousands in Central Asia.

Formerly there was not a single school for natives in Tashkent, there were 95 per cent illiterates among the men, and 99.5 per cent among the women, on account of a strict religious prohibition of writing. To-day there is a Central Asian University in Tashkent, Cotton and Textile Institutes, an Institute of Irrigation, a Mechanical Institute, and an Architectural Institute, in short, some two dozen different colleges, including a model Topographical Museum; and more than ten thousand students, men and women, are devoting themselves to all imaginable subjects—Hegelian dialectics, the mysteries of cotton and silkworm culture, the English language, and colloid chemistry.

There are many marvels in Tashkent to-day that nobody would have dreamed of formerly: special Uzbek newspapers and journals, printing presses, and a special transmitting station which causes "trumpets" in the streets to bellow forth Uzbek sentences automatically in ear-splitting tones; a special film studio that causes

"people made of nothing but light" to run across the screen; and dozens of large works, some of which employ as much as 90 per cent women, and these latter are often the leading firms.

On the borders of the old city, grey and always dusty and consisting of clay huts, the Uzbek Ghetto that was formerly over a mile and a half from the city of the "lords of Tashkent," a new and verdant settlement is now growing up, with electricity, wireless, drainage, dwelling houses, cinemas, and the "Park for Culture and Recreation" that is now almost obligatory in the large towns of the Union. True, in the old quarter itself there are still swarms of little barbers' shops and others, half derelict mosques, minarets, bright-coloured silk *khalats*, large turbans, white patriarchal beards, noisy children, hee-hawing donkeys, and melancholy camels. And here and there, along the *duvals*, the clay fences, you still see a woman's figure hidden behind a lattice of black horsehair, wearing the disfiguring *paranja*, flitting past as if she were sleep-walking, like a "living sack." But there is a widely known women's club in the very centre of this quarter with some four thousand members and all the appropriate cultural appurtenances: libraries, crèches, kindergartens, *likbes* centres, needlework shops, medical and legal consulting rooms, and all manner of courses and educational circles, that are always overcrowded.

Anyone who likes can go to the Uzbek theatre at night and cry to their heart's content over the musical drama *Leila Mejnun*, the popular tragic hero of the Arab legend, who went mad for love, or enjoy *Hamlet* in the Uzbek language and interpretation. And everywhere, not least in new plays by native authors, you can admire women as well as men, acting, singing, dancing. And you now see a number of women among the audience, here and there one wearing a *paranja*, but mostly such as were veiled until recently. You can recognize the elder women by a manner that is still a little oppressed

and shy, whilst the younger ones, the *komssomolkas*, frequently seem thoroughly pleased with themselves and the world, besides being self-confident in demeanour and firm in gait. Not far away, likewise in the old city, lives the young Uzbek lyric poetess Aidyn, whose poems are dedicated to the awakened women of the East.

You may find many new and wonderful women in Tashkent, such as never existed before. It is impossible to enumerate them all. But "the queen" of them all, "the marvel of marvels," is *Deshakhan Abidova*, the President of the City Soviet of Tashkent, the Vice-President of the Executive Committee of the Federal Republic of Uzbekistan, and a member of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. In other words, she is Mayoress of Tashkent, second in command in one of the most important states in Central Asia, and a member of the Government of the Soviet Union.

My attention had been called in Moscow, before I started on my journey, to this woman who is in a sense the first in her country, and my curiosity aroused. And as she had been informed of the object of my journey by the representative of her Government in Moscow, I found myself, barely an hour after my arrival in Tashkent, seated at her large writing table opposite this "city manageress" in a reception room adorned with exquisite native carpets and portraits of the leaders.

It was her eyes that struck me immediately in her outward appearance, and later, again and again, whenever I met *Deshakhan Abidova*. Everything else about her, attractive as it was, was overshadowed by those eyes. Such burning, flashing eyes, reflecting not only all the hardship and despair of past centuries, and the succeeding revolt, rebellion, struggle, and readiness to die of an Eastern woman, but also the great devotion and confidence with which the victrix faces the present, helping to build it up; hardly anywhere in Europe would you meet such eyes.

And so Deshakhan Abidova seemed to me at the very beginning of our acquaintance like a symbol, a living embodiment of the myth of the new woman in the heart of ancient Turkistan; and later, wherever I met her, the original, strong impression was confirmed and deepened.

Unlike most Eastern women, of whom I have met hundreds in recent years on my many journeys, Abidova does not care to speak of herself. It took time to persuade her to tell me the story of her life, a story that is a worthy successor to the ancient fairy-tales of her homeland, itself the latest product of the real world.

Deshakhan was born in 1900 in Nanai, one of the many *kishlaks* or villages of the Tashkent district, as one of the large family of an impoverished *dekhkan* or country labourer who worked indefatigably from early morning till late in the night, and yet was always hungry. Before the mother could count twelve winters since the daughter's birth, before the child had once satisfied her hunger in her short and joyless life, she was sold to a usurer of sixty-five in Baita Kurgan, a little over nine miles from Tashkent. And on this occasion it was not for the sake of a large and tempting *kaly*m or bride price, but because of a debt, amounting in all to 20 roubles, lent by the man to her father, but swelled by interest to 150 roubles in a few months, which the debtor, who was then seriously ill, could not pay. So at last he had no choice but to yield to the urgency and threats of the inexorable creditor, and hand over his eldest daughter, then the mainstay of the family, in order to pay off at least 70 roubles.

For five years Deshakhan, still a child, served this man, who had three other wives besides her, as "fourth pleasure," but even more as maidservant, slave, a kind of household implement; in her free time she played dolls with his grand-daughters for the first time in her life. At last, when she was about seventeen, she fell seriously ill because of her prematurely begun sexual life. For

months she could not rise from her bed, and one pitch dark night, when she could no longer bear the reproaches with which they loaded her, she ran away from her "master" to Tashkent. She was picked up by a Russian passer-by there towards morning, utterly exhausted, in a state of collapse, taken to a hospital, and so at last received medical treatment.

In this hospital, where Deshakhan spent several weeks, she made the acquaintance of a Tatar nurse who took her under her care. One day, when Deshakhan was telling her sad story, she heard that a revolt was then in progress in Tashkent against the Tsar Nicholas, that a new Government and new laws were hourly expected, and that consequently she need not return to the *kishlak* and the hated old man. "I had never heard anything of a Nicholas before," said Abidova, "and I did not know a soul in Tashkent. So when I was discharged from the hospital, I went straight to the Tatar nurse, and there chanced to meet an acquaintance from the neighbouring *kishlak*, and, as there was nothing else to do, I hired myself as a maidservant to the woman's father, where I did the heaviest work for another four years."

But meantime the new law governing the lives of Eastern women had come into force. Deshakhan, keenly intelligent and then twenty-one, had not only learnt to read and write and divorced her husband, who had discovered her whereabouts and was constantly threatening to murder her, but had also been elected as a delegate. So she was able to leave service and devote herself to work among native women, and in general to social activities, in which she was widely supported at once. A new, hitherto undreamed-of world opened itself to her, and a passionate longing for knowledge and education seized the young woman, and when, in 1921, the first Workers' Faculty was opened in Tashkent, she was one of the first to enter and later to pass her examinations.

But at first the new customs were slow to establish themselves, and even as librarian of the Tashkent Women's Club, Deshakhan was still wearing her *paranja* in 1922 and 1923, though shortly afterwards she laid it finally aside. Then she was made head of the Samarqand Women's Section, remained there three years, returned again to Tashkent, and began to climb the ladder of social service so quickly that in 1934/35 she won the highest position both in the town and in the Federal Republic of Uzbekistan, and therewith one of the highest in the whole Soviet Union.

During my prolonged stay in Tashkent, I tried to observe Deshakhan Abidova as often as possible at her work and to study her in every way. I have a particularly vivid memory of a conference which she brought to an end while I waited for her in her office in the *Gorsoviet*, the Town Hall; she was conferring with three male "responsible," but nevertheless rather slow-witted, Uzbek officials; as always, she was simply dressed in black, with a dark, Orenburg shawl over her shoulders, her fiery shining eyes framed by her short, black hair, smooth but refractory, and she smoked one cigarette after another. I saw how she brought them all to book, and at the same time not only talked down two telephones standing before her, but also kept her secretary busy.

"What good are you as a fellow worker, if you are afraid of difficulties? How can we build up the Soviet state with such comrades?" she said in Russian to one of the three companions.

And then, interrupted by a shrill ring, into the telephone: "Just send them away. They have received their answer from me, and now they are bombarding your door. The work *must* be finished at the agreed time. It is no use protesting, and we are all in the same boat." Then she hastily seized the other telephone, which had begun to ring. "There is no objection in principle,

but shall I tell you a secret? We are very much behind-hand with the output of iron—I can't give you the figures from memory. But tell him to place resources at our disposal. That's agreed, then? We'll settle the matter finally on the 29th. What, do you want to now, at once? To-morrow is the day out; what a pity, I wanted to get a little fresh air, but if it can't be helped . . ."

Somebody knocked at the door. Glancing at her secretary and hurriedly rolling a cigarette, Deshakhon said smiling: "Bolt the door and say that for the moment Abidova has simply ceased to exist."

Then again, speaking down the telephone: "But if the resolution is just to remain on paper, I will absolutely refuse to sign, so take note of that. I will only put my name to it, if it is seriously meant. . . ."

Another official entered by an inner door and approached Abidova with a question in an undertone. Obviously indignant, she whispered something in his ear. Then, for a little, they all spoke Uzbek, and finally she said emphatically, again in Russian: "That settles the question once and for all." And turning resolutely to me, she motioned the others away. "But now, *Tovarishchi*, please leave me at leisure."

In the private conversation which followed, Abidova explained to me her immediate plans as "city manageress" of Tashkent, and told me what measures she had already initiated with regard to drainage, the building of houses and streets, electrification, child welfare, schools, the liquidation of illiteracy, and other cultural activities, measures which she intended to develop further in course of time. And again she was all aflame: "Tashkent, half a million inhabitants, that means that it is the largest and most important city in Central Asia; in area it is only one quarter less than Moscow. But now we want to make it, like Moscow, a model for the whole Soviet East."

"Until the Revolution there was only a mechanical workshop here and two cotton mills in all, with no Uzbek women workers, of course, because such things simply did not happen in that world. But now, what *Gigants* we are building! We have already some hundred large works, and the workers are on the average 40 per cent women. And as for the 12,000 workers in our textile *Kombinat*, they are quite 75 per cent women.

"We have certainly had hard struggles, very hard, especially in 1927 and 1928. Our enemies even exploited natural calamities, like the earthquake in Namangan, for instance, for the purposes of agitation. Some 400 women lost their lives in Uzbekistan alone in the struggle, and some men as well. But now we have attained all that we wanted, and now that people have shown such great confidence in me as to place me in my present office, I regard it as my first duty to prove myself fully and thoroughly worthy of their confidence."

With these words Deshakhan Abidova pulled the Orenburg shawl from her shoulders to her head with an accustomed gesture that seemed almost automatic. And it flashed into my mind that this unique mayoress and head of a Government had been an illiterate maid-servant only fifteen years ago, at the lowest grade of culture, and that she had doubtless been in the habit of pulling up her *paranja* with exactly the same gesture not long ago when she was just going to start out somewhere.

It is hardly necessary to say that Abidova, like most women in the Soviet East, is a good popular speaker. I heard her for the first time at a celebration on the occasion of the October festivities, in the overcrowded Great Theatre, as Vice-President of the Executive Committee of the Federal Republic of Uzbekistan; she was giving her official annual report before the heads of the Government and the numerous guests of honour and delegates from abroad. Like her own burning eyes,

like all the lights and chandeliers in the festively adorned hall, so her audience were rapt and aflame, indeed electrified, and of course there were a great many women among them. And when she sat down at the red-covered table on the platform where all the committee sat, there was no end to the storm of applause from two thousand hands.

On another occasion she spoke in an intimate circle, at a banquet given to me as the guest of honour at parting by the Uzbek Authors' Union. The company included not only all the numerous authors and poets in Tashkent, male and female, but all the women who were well-known for their public work who might interest me, and, further, all the women dancers and singers of the Opera, who gave a last display of their art before me; every time I saw it I was full of fresh enthusiasm.

Here, too, Deshakhan Abidova appeared as "city manageress," and provided alike for the continuance of my studies of women in the Soviet East and for plenty of native delicacies, among which was the *plov* that is the supreme delight of Central Asiatics, a rice dish which you are always told is nowhere so well prepared as in the place where you just happen to be eating it.

Then, she, as first speaker, gave an address full of interesting matter, and characteristically Eastern in its wealth of imagery. Several other women followed her, comparing their former lives with the new age that had now dawned. And when I thanked the gathering for all that they had done to enrich my experience, Deshakhan Abidova closed the evening, turning to me, with these words: "Look at all these people, whether they are authors or artists, men or women, look more closely at them once more. They are our flowers—after the Revolution. And I, Abidova, stand before you as one of those cocks of whom Lenin said that they must learn to govern the state. But, as you can convince

yourself, there are hundreds and thousands of such Abidovas to-day, and that is what you absolutely must tell the world across the frontiers."

That same evening I continued my journey and proceeded from Tashkent to Ferghana. Abidova promised to call for me in her official car and take me to the station. Punctually at ten o'clock, as we had agreed, she turned up at my hotel. Several committee members of the Authors' Union, on the contrary, who had promised to come much earlier and help me, in case of need, to dispatch my luggage, were, as usual, very unpunctual. And as some of the hotel servants were absent, because it was the "day out," and we had to hurry to the train, I saw Abidova negotiating for help at the porter's desk and reaching the entrance with one of my heavy suitcases in either hand, motioning to me to follow her.

Outside, in a four-seater, her younger sister was waiting for us, a student of architecture, who not only lived with her as a daughter, but actually called her "mother." The chauffeur set out at a breakneck pace, and a few minutes later we stopped at the crowded station, so crowded that for the moment I could not imagine how we should reach the train through such a throng, besides which there was no porter in sight anywhere. But before I could renew my energetic protests, Abidova was again running with my suitcases to a side entrance, told the militiaman guarding it to see that the rooms reserved for members of the Government were opened at once, and entered the special waiting-room with my luggage; yet she was still every inch "city manageress" of Tashkent and second in command in the Government of the Federal Republic of Uzbekistan. She was all pride and delight that we had succeeded in getting there in time.

I took leave, and during the journey I long continued to reflect on this final scene. How would a Western

European dignitary have behaved under such circumstances?

Besides Deshakhan Abidova and the Uzbek dancer, Tamara Khanum, about whom I wrote at length in a previous chapter, I made the acquaintance of a number of other Eastern women in Tashkent, of course, many of whom came to me spontaneously, without previous introduction. Sometimes they came to tell me of their yesterday and to-day, to pour out their overflowing hearts to me, but sometimes to see the "foreigner" who had come from so far on their account, and, consequently, was doubly interesting to them. One of these acquaintances I count among my happiest memories.

It was one late afternoon. I had only just determined to spend one of the rare moments of solitude in my room when, a minute later, there was a knocking at the door. I opened it, and a charming young thing stretched out both hands towards me in joyful excitement; she had dark, shining eyes and two black plaits hanging down on both sides of a madonna-like and yet mischievous, girlish face.

"Are you Mrs. Halle?" "Yes, I am." "Then it's really true. Your name is out there on the board against No. 7, and I knew at once; that's nobody that lives here. Of course the *shveitsar* (porter) admitted it directly, and now I have come to look at you. I'm from Turkmenistan myself, from Ashqabad, and my name is *Enejan Geldiyeva*, but you can just call me Enejan, and as for my work, I'm an assistant to the director of the Political Section of the People's Commissariat for Agriculture. How nice that you've come. Will you visit us, too? Do, please, and then I'll take you about the district and show you everything, everything."

"Why are you here, yourself?" I asked my unexpected, but very attractive, guest with the long title. "Because I've got to take over a waggon-load of very valuable goods: a motor car, twenty-five bicycles, ten

typewriters, 150 pair of boots, and 1,500 metres of material for military blouses. As soon as I have got it, I shall return. Do come to us soon."

A quarter of an hour later I was acquainted with Enejan's whole life story. She was already thirty-one, although you would hardly think her more than twenty; that is rare in the East. At the age of nine she was "married" to a man of fifty-five for two horses, a cow, and 500 roubles in silver; at first she had to do the heaviest work for him, and later she bore him four children, none of whom lived. But when, eight years later, the new law for the protection of women was proclaimed, she ran away from her husband at the risk of her life. And at an age when Western European girls are hardly regarded as grown-up, Enejan began a new life, her second. She began to study, and to work not only for the household, but also for the general community.

I asked Enejan where she had left her tall hat, from which Turkman women had hitherto been inseparable. She answered: "Oh, I burned it not long ago." "Why? Would it not to have been better to keep it as a remembrance?" "A remembrance? What for? There are plenty of those hats in our museum. When once all our women are emancipated, and our children and grandchildren ask what things used to be like, we will take them to the museum and show them those heavy, heavy hats. But I don't need my own for that." "Then what do you wear now?" "A little *tyubetyeika*. You shall have one, too. Will you wear it?" "Yes, with pleasure," "Well, we'll make you a *tyubetyeika* that will provide work for two months. Oh, it will be a beauty!" "Two months? Isn't that rather too much?" "It's to be specially lovely, and if so we can't do it in less. Oh, do come to us soon. And you must tell the Central Committee that you would like me to go everywhere with you. Do you know, Fanninajan (the suffix "jan" means "my darling," "my soul"), I love

and honour you, and later I'll tell you everything, all about my last ten years. From the October Revolution onwards, I'll give you an exact account of every year. I'll be with you a lot. And now I must leave you, for I'm going to the Uzbek theatre to-day. But I live opposite you, you know, and whenever I have a free minute I shall come to you. I'm so glad you're here, Fanninajan."

A smacking kiss, and this delightful child of nature had vanished like a Fata Morgana, this blend of mischief, earnestness, objectivity, childishness, and devotion to duty, this refreshing product of the hot, sandy desert that pushed forward to the very confines of the town, of the sun, and the new era.

Afterwards I learned that Enejan not only filled a high, responsible post in Ashqabad, but was really regarded as very capable, and had already helped a number of Turkman women to start a new life. But unhappily we did not meet again in Ashqabad, for just at the time when I was in Turkmenistan she was in a remote district, where it was her task to supervise the cotton harvest and whither it would have taken many days to go. But a year later, when I was passing through the Caucasus at the end of my journey, and was in the city of Baku, that faces Turkmenistan on the opposite shore of the Caspian Sea, and was vividly reminded of her, I read in the newspapers that Enejan was just then in Moscow, as a member of a delegation from her country, and that her whole demeanour and her speeches in the Kremlin were winning her golden opinions.

" . . . It is now thirteen years ago that a red silk *paranja* and a black horsehair *chachvan* excited the notice of the committee of the sixth conference of the *Komssomol* in Moscow among the numerous plain suits and blouses of the other members. A woman from the East sat in a prominent place near the chairman and several guests of honour of Krupskaya's and others.

"Krupskaya turned to her smiling: 'Tovarishch,' she said, 'the committee is being bombarded with notes, begging you to uncover your face.'

" 'Tovarishch,' a *komssomolets* delegate from the Don Basin wrote to her, 'do throw that rubbish away.'

" 'We girls and women workers of the Krassnokholm textile factory beg you to lay aside that instrument of the oppression of women,' ran another note signed with thirty names.

" 'Now, go, Tajikhan,' whispered an Uzbek to her who sat beside her.

"There was something in all these voices and exhortations that was, at any rate, stronger than her fear, her timidity, her confusion. So she rose, took one or two steps towards the platform, and saw through the black lattice-work how the whole hall came nearer to her, as if it made up one great unit. The woman trembled, and for a moment she staggered backwards, but then she saw in the front row a group of her own country-folk who did not take their eyes off her. With the same sort of feeling as that of a person who plunges into ice-cold water, the Uzbek woman tore off her *chachvan* and her *paranja* and hung both on the banner at the edge of the platform.

"The film operators and photographers straightway placed their apparatus and a man with a long, white beard handed her a nosegay of white roses, saying: 'From the old revolutionaries to the young rebel.' The Pioneers who were present also sent their delegates to her and the Krassnokholm *komssomolka*s gave Tajikhan a red silk kerchief for her head.

"But after the meeting, when the woman stepped out into the street, half covering her face with her hand, and seemed partly blinded by the unaccustomed brightness, a pock-marked man came up to her, no longer young, with slit eyes and wearing a Russian blouse and a *kepi*; he took her hand in silence and led her to the Hotel Metropole. Only occasionally, when the kom-

somoletses who accompanied them expressed their approval in too lively a manner, he showed a row of well-preserved teeth, by which he meant to smile, and then closed his lips again directly.

"In this way he kept silence till the train in which they travelled away from the capital of the U.S.S.R. stopped, snorting and puffing, at Khoqand. There the man looked timidly around him, quitted his companion, and soon returned with a worn *paranja* and an old *chachvan* that he had hastily secured near by. He handed them to the woman, and it was a silent, shapeless figure that walked beside him again through the streets of the familiar town.

"The first to meet the couple was old Murid Akhmal Tajayev, who gazed after them for a long time and then cried out in relief: 'There goes Tajikhan with her husband. So it seems the people were quite wrong who said in the bazaar she would come back with her face bare.' "

According to her biographer, *V. Gerassimova*, Tajikhan had been sold for 200 roubles at the age of eleven to this man, who had nine wives before her, one of whom died from a fatal kick that he gave her ; he was a *tabib*, or doctor-priest, by profession. Her father was a miner who had to support not only a wife and eight children, but also a mother and a grandmother who was nearly blind ; the *tabib* undertook to restore her sight only if he were given the granddaughter in payment. Well, one granddaughter more or less really does not make much difference when there are so many and the family is so poor as to live mainly on grass and cotton-oil, and is sometimes even reduced to robbing the underground stores of the field-mice. They conceded the man's desire.

Tajikhan entered her purchaser's house crying bitterly ; on the very first day he gave her a doll, a thing hitherto unknown to her. But on the fourth day after the "marriage" her husband gave her such a

blow in the face that she fell bleeding to the ground, because a neighbour had said she had met her in the street with a *chachvan* that was not thick enough. After that her "father," as she called her lord and master at first, ill-treated her almost every day. And in addition his eldest wife, who immediately swore vengeance on the youngest, tried to make away with her once and for all by mixing ground glass with her bread.

But Tajikhan was a chip of a hard block, she was resolute and tough and not easy to make away with, and she bore it all, till the Soviet State came to power and her husband decided to support it, at least outwardly.

So he had himself and Tajikhan enrolled in the Party, concealed the existence of his other wives, and even managed to get them both sent to Tashkent, where the husband was to study. In this way Tajikhan managed to learn to read and write and proceeded zealously to educate herself further; she attended several courses, attracted notice by her remarkable intelligence, and was sent as a delegate from Khoqand to Moscow in 1929, whither her husband accompanied her, and where we have already met her. Afterwards she worked in the Women's Section in Ferghana, but still went about in a *paranja* because her husband continued to bully and beat her for her activities. It was not until, after bitter inward struggles, she had attempted suicide, from which, however, she was saved, that she determined to leave him once and for all. She came to Moscow and afterwards passed through the *Kurov* there, the University of Eastern Workers.

She was awarded first prize for her thesis on "The Crisis in the Capitalist Countries" in Moscow, and now, at the age of barely thirty, *Tajikhan Shadiyeva* is a member of the Government of the Federal Republic of Uzbekistan and editor of the largest Uzbek women's journal, *Yengi Yul* (The New Road); she occupies the highest position in Ferghana, whither she offered to go at a very critical moment for the district. Moreover, she

is generally regarded as a brilliant organizer, a burning fire, a regular "she-devil," who sweeps all her fellow-workers off their feet and carries them with her. In addition to all that she beat her second husband not long ago in a Socialist competition; he, too, fills an important position, and she is happily married to him.

I travelled from Tashkent to FERGHANA in no small measure for the sake of making the personal acquaintance of this parallel to Deshakhan Abidova who, as I heard on all sides, has outward charm, is womanly and musical and artistic in all ways, yet at the same time energetic and prudent and no less active than Deshakhan. Ferghana, formerly called Skobelev or Novi Margelan, is now the centre of the valley bearing the same name, lying between the snow-covered ranges of the Pamir, Alai, and Tien Shan Mountains which beckon from both sides, in the basin of the Sir Darya, bordering on Chinese Turkistan. The valley of Ferghana has always been famous, the "Pearl of Central Asia," and Chinese, and later other, travellers have recounted marvels of it ever since 1250 B.C. It is claimed that in 1933 the best "Egyptian" cotton in the world was produced in one of the many cotton *kolkholes* in this land of an ancient civilization, once known as the "Land of the Seventy Cities."

But this very much-lauded cotton, this native "white gold," unexpectedly upset my plans for making Tajikhan's acquaintance. For I heard too late that just before my arrival the word had gone forth that the whole cotton crop in Ferghana, and, indeed, throughout the "cotton Republic" of Uzbekistan, which alone covers two thirds of the cotton requirements of the whole Soviet Union, was to be brought in before the imminent November festivities. So Tajikhan Shadiyeva, who had to direct and supervise the "campaign" in the whole district around Ferghana, had been travelling for four days and four sleepless nights all over the district when I arrived.

And nobody, not even she herself, could say exactly where she could be found at any given time.

I waited nearly a week in Ferghana for the woman to whom is entrusted the care of this land, richly fertile thanks to the waters of the Sir Darya and the neighbouring mountain streams, and therefore, also, thickly populated. It is a land belonging only in part to Uzbekistan, and in part to the Tajik and Kirghiz Republics, and it embraces a vast medley, not only of peoples and languages, but also of phases of human evolution.

Here I visited an immense camp of nomad Kirghizes in the neighbourhood of the city, which is itself supplied with all the inventions of modern technical science. It was a living fragment of antiquity, and two days later it had moved to the mountains, where these primitive people, like the kindred Kazakhs, always choose the most beautiful spots. Seated on some granite rock that serves as a mosque, they are capable of sitting for days and nights on end, wholly rapt in meditation, softly humming a melody, hymning the world, creation, the moon, and the stars without end. If you ask them where they have their dwelling, you often receive the answer : " My house is the Alai or the Pamir." But immediately afterwards I visited a cotton *kolkhos* where the President, a young Uzbek woman, a former maidservant who had, strangely enough, a negroid head, offered me the popular green tea in a *piala* (a cup without a handle) on a beautiful native carpet spread on the grass, taking a few sips first herself to do me honour. A gramophone that had been given her as a prize played a vapid Western European popular song meanwhile, and most of the other women provided the background of the idyll, looking like immense poppies at their work, with their red head kerchiefs, after the *komsomolka* style, on the snow-white field.

In the city itself, which gives the impression of an enormous park with its double rows of tall poplars—it

is the poplar avenues and groves that give the oases in Turkistan their characteristic appearance—I visited the *Sags*, the registrar's office, where now—unlike earlier years—there are far more marriages than divorces. And I saw an astonishingly large number of barbers' shops where people are perpetually being invited to have their eyebrows dyed and drawn together, an indigenous art in these parts. I likewise visited the largest teacher's college in Uzbekistan, with its hostel for five hundred students of both sexes; I got them to show me all the native women's films that they happened to have, and in the museum I saw all kinds of *khalats* and *ryubetyeikas*, which are embroidered in these parts. I learned much during my stay in Ferghana, and saw much.

Only Tajikhan, for whom I was waiting, remained invisible for days. And when at last she arrived in the town, at three o'clock in the morning of all times, because she had been told that I was in Ferghana and wanted to talk with me herself and at the same time hold a little conference of her fellow-workers, and then be at her post in the country again at daybreak, I had been taken ill the evening before and was unable to leave my bed, and had, moreover, taken my ticket so that I was obliged to continue my journey two days later.

Native poets of former days have called the ancient city of SAMARQAND the "Visage of the Earth." Its former name was Marakanda, and it was captured by Alexander of Macedon, and later by the Arabs, the Seljuks, and Jenghis Khan; in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it was the residence of Tamburlaine the Great, who adorned it with magnificent buildings, and from 1868 onwards it was annexed to Russia under the Emirs of Bukhara; after the October Revolution it was for a time the capital of the Republic of Uzbekistan. During the last fifteen years this visage, upon which so many and various epochs, historical periods, styles, rulers, wars, and, again and again, Islam have left such

deep furrows, has changed its expression fundamentally and, if possible, become even more fantastic than before. In spite of co-operative societies, people still haggle and bargain and offer for sale, with the dignity that marks the Oriental, in the stalls and bazaars in the heart of the old city, close to the *Registan*, one of the most magnificent and beautiful squares in the world, where the unbelievable silhouettes of the mosques, overwhelming and monumental, though often destroyed by earthquakes, tower against an eternally cloudless sky ; their walls are glazed or overlaid with bas reliefs that look like many-coloured carpets, and they have keel-arched doors and tall, slightly leaning minarets.

A variegated medley of caravans with horsemen, donkeys, and camels make their way through the thick crowds of picturesque, bustling people. Here and there you still see little groups of thickly veiled women squatting together, offering almonds, raisins, nuts, scarlet pomegranates, and dried melons for sale. If you are lucky you discover somewhere beneath an immense outspread umbrella a story-teller, an aged, white-bearded man, but with eyes still young and shining, sitting cross-legged and not only telling his reverently attentive audience of the long-past deeds of the great Tamburlaine, but revealing the immediate future to them.

In the little *chaikhanas* or tea-rooms round about, where the men used to whisper the latest town gossip to one another, the most recent news of some scientific expedition in the Arctic is now proclaimed by a loud-speaker, or of the international political situation or else instructive lectures or reading are arranged. And in the *Registan* Square itself you could until lately attend "exemplary" trials, held with great pomp, of husbands who had murdered their "disobedient" wives—that square where formerly the "Hosts of the Believers" gathered from all lands in mad ecstasy, beneath the mighty walls of the surrounding mosques, and where no woman might ever show her face. Sometimes it was

Deshikhan Abidova, sometimes Tajikhan Shadiyeva, who appeared there as public prosecutors and agitators, hurling their fierce and burning words out into the wide square, whilst vast throngs of native women from all points of the compass (and a number of men) were convulsed with loud sobs and moved to a new kind of ecstasy that spurred them to activity.

In one of the *medressas*, or Islamic theological academies attached to these venerable mosques, is housed the "Museum of the Emancipation of the Women of the East," the newest sight of Samarqand, which would have been unthinkable a few years ago.

Here the visitor receives concrete and ocular instruction on the yesterday and to-day of Central Asian women in well-arranged glass cases or on the surrounding walls in a suite of rooms where formerly such a thing would never have been dreamed of. You may learn the countless forms of superstition held by Eastern women from the numerous exhibits of amulets and talismans and fetiches to protect them from the Evil Eye or cure childlessness and every possible disease; then there are all the varieties of native *chachvan* and *paranja* to be studied, and the bright coloured trousers belonging to them, tied at the lower end. Instructive photographs show what confinement in the *ichkarsi* was like, those women's prisons, essentially always the same, with only slight differences. You may admire the skilful and beautiful products of the women's industries in Uzbekistan, and close beside them diagrams tell you the present degree of women's participation in the various educational and social and political institutions, and in the country's output. Here, too, in a position of honour, is a portrait of Deshakhan Abidova, more than life size, for she is very popular among her comrades, as might be expected.

Of course there is a Russo-European modern city in Samarqand, as in every large town in the Soviet East, in addition to the old, Asiatic quarter; it has a Lenin

monument and a principal street bearing his name. But not far distant from it rises the famous mausoleum Gur Emir, dating from the fifteenth century, with its great, shimmering, turquoise blue, melon-shaped dome ; though it is falling to ruin, yet it is still an adornment and quite dominates the place ; it is here, in a crypt, that the world conqueror Tamburlaine is buried.

With eager interest you enter the inner hall from the outer court ; all around, in marble shrines, are various other tombs of relatives and friends of the sovereign. But in the centre stands the tombstone of Tamburlaine the Great, consisting of two intersecting blocks of blackish green jade—the largest known blocks of that rare stone—and guarded by an aged, withered watchman in place of the *mullah* who used to be there—so old that he might seem to be a contemporary of the illustrious dead. One would like to indulge for a little in quiet meditation on the subject, now, perhaps, more seasonable than ever, of the transitory nature of all earthly power and greatness, but also of all human suffering. But instead of that you can hardly help laughing when you glance at the Russian translation of the long Arabic inscription on the stone, which the living mummy officiously hands you, and read among other things :

“ I, the famous lame warrior, have conquered Bukhara, Turkmenistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, Gurjistan, Turkey, Baghdad, Arabia, Afghanistan, Hindustan, *England, Berlin, and Russia.*

The most interesting monument for the historian of art in Samarcand, or in all Central Asia, is the Shahu Zinda (the Living Shah), dating from the golden age of Mussulman civilization under Tamburlaine and his successors, the Timurids ; overwhelming alike by its architecture and its colour decorations, it is really a whole series of mausoleums, a street of them leading to the plateau of Aphro-siab, of ancient Marakanda, in the midst of a wonderful landscape, where archæological excavations are now in progress. These sights, this

monumental quality, are a source of never-ending wonder.

But even more interesting from our point of view are, perhaps, the remains of what was once the principal and by far the most beautiful mosque, the chief mosque in Samarqand, which Tamburlaine had erected by Indian, Persian, and Chinese masters for his favourite wife, Bibi Khanum, whose name it bears, and adorned inside and out with fabulous magnificence. One of the two minarets, near the principal gate leading into the courtyard, has preserved its rich mosaic facing. And in the courtyard itself an immense stone *Koran* pulpit, more than two yards square, still stands, to which is attributed the power of helping childless women to have children, if they crawl under it.

But now the birth-rate is high in the district. Again and again I was struck with the number of young women in a family way in Samarqand and all over Central Asia. Indeed the women are so prolific just now that a young Uzbek woman doctor who had just completed her studies at the University of Samarqand, built in the newest style, told me that Uzbek women often procure abortion at their husbands' instigation—*o tempora, o mores!*

That, indeed, was before the middle of 1936, that is to say before the Soviet Union, surprisingly enough, had issued a prohibition of abortion. Since then, according to the latest reports, the birth-rate in and around Tashkent and Samarqand has risen by no less than 352 per cent!

The hotel in which I lived in the "noble" and "holy" city of BUKHARA, in old Bukhara, the former capital of the Empire of that name, the centre of Mohammedan divinity, the home of the most sophisticated interpreters of the *Koran*, was a former *medressa*, a kind of theological academy. My room on the second floor was reached through a small anteroom, and led on, like all the adjoining former scholars' cells—some two dozen in number—to an open gallery, surrounding the stone-paved, octagonal

inner courtyard, in the centre of which, in place of the former basin, a great *samovar* stands, steaming night and day, in which my neighbours, mostly Russian, made their tea.

A teachers' college, with living quarters for girls and boys, is housed in three more of the 138 *medressas* that were once to be found in this Central Asian rival of Mecca, together with 364 mosques (supposedly to match the number of streets), thirteen old cemeteries, sixteen large baths, fifty bazaars, and twelve gates, of which all but one were closed after sundown. The head of this teachers' college, however, is not a man but a Turkish woman, *Margot Mamli Sade*, young, energetic, and fiery, coming originally from the Caucasus (the Azerbaijan district) but having grown up in Samarqand and been trained there and in Moscow. It is not very long ago that she was going about in a *paranja*.

But now her six-year-old daughter asks: "What is a *paranja*?" The child always addresses her mother as *Madryakhan*, directress, and once, when the latter got up late, she greeted her with: "Oh, oh, *Madryakhan* will be late at college." Like her mother, she takes intense delight in dancing and singing, and acts in the kindergarten as commander of a group that she has herself organized for hulling the cotton flowers—in those parts young and old are literally possessed with the cotton idea. When she is told that everything was different in former times, she answers with the thoroughly childish question: "Were there ravens, and birds, here in the old times, or not?"

This budding Eastern beauty from the once so notorious Bukhara knows very well what she is saying when she declares that she is "prettier than all the rest," with her black eyes, her finely drawn eyebrows, and the little black spots on her cheeks. But she does not know that women who dared to violate the *namus*, the unwritten moral code that was forced upon them (which was associated with the wearing of the *paranja*), were flung

down from the minaret *Toi Munar*, nearly two hundred feet high, the "Tower of Death," whether they were pretty or ugly.

For now it is quite a different sort of tower that was recently the talk of Bukhara and its neighbourhood, and which the people came from the remotest *kishlaks* to gaze up at with admiration and suspicion ; it is the Soviet minaret, standing only on slender iron feet and appearing quite out of keeping with its surroundings, the newly built water tower. This tower alone supplies the city of Bukhara with more water than all the eighty-five little stagnant ponds or *khauses* could in former days ; they were very popular, surrounded by acacias and mulberries, but they smelt foul and were dirty, for they were seldom renewed, and, in fact, they were the principal source of death and disease in the town,*though the whole life of Bukhara after sundown was carried on around them.

In the zig-zag of Bukhara's winding, dusty, grey alleys you really do not see a single woman in a *paranja* nowadays. As I have already explained, that is chiefly because the women here were more oppressed than elsewhere in Central Asia. For in this town, in addition to all their other masters—the Lord God, their employer, the *mullah*, and their own husbands—they also had their sovereign lord, the Emir, who regarded all Bukhara as his property and all women as his slaves. No wonder that this fivefold pressure later called forth the strongest counter-pressure.

Accompanied by Mamli Sade I went to see the summer residence of the last Emir of Bukhara, Sseid Mir Alimagan, the sovereign also of part of what is now Tajikistan and Turkmenistan ; it is on the edge of the town and built in a semi-European, semi-Asiatic, but, at any rate, rather barbarically ostentatious style. The pleasure palace, with its wonderful oriental carpets, its costly Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Persian vases, and its other art treasures, is now transformed into a museum ; it contains a suite of rooms of all sizes, shapes, and

colours, magnificently adorned with mosaics, filigree, and inlaid work. But the adjoining harem, formerly peopled by no less than four hundred concubines—the Emir fled with his three principal wives to Afghanistan in 1920—has now been fitted out as a Home of Rest for *kolkhos* men and women, whom you meet in the shady avenues of the beautiful, spacious flower garden and vineyard and orchard surrounding the palace.

In this Garden of Eden, immediately behind the palace, is the celebrated swimming bath, and beside it a high outlook tower approached by a stairway on a little terrace; a former servant maid in the harem, who led us there, told us that in former times, on hot summer nights, the harem women, the Emir's *houris*, bathed by moonlight in the rose-decked bath, filled with the freshest, best, purest water to be found in all Bukhara, whilst he himself, enthroned on a seat, enjoyed the heavenly sight of this Earthly Paradise. But then, when he chose to make a chosen lady "happy" by his favour, she was brought to him, if possible that same night, skilfully anointed and painted, and richly adorned and robed. When the chosen one approached the magnificent couch upon which her lord and master condescended to await her, she had to appear before him with head bent low, bowing frequently, and respectfully kiss the hand, heavy with costly rings, that was graciously held out to her, in gratitude for the great honour that awaited her. But the Emir generally gave the much envied woman on the very next day to one or other of his servants.

That was about the manner in which this rather undersized, flabby, and well-padded man carried on his "family life." And now he glances indifferently at the curious visitor from the painted frames of the many portraits exhibited in the ante-room of what was once his palace, sometimes in the costly garb of an Oriental ruler, sometimes in the Tsar's uniform, his breast starred with distinguished medals.

Of course the harem had to be constantly supplied anew. There was a special staff of agents, including a number of old women, who were constantly travelling about Central Asia looking for fresh "wares," new little girls. Every father, however exalted his position, had to give his daughter without question, if the Emir, who was descended through his mother from the inexorable Jenghis Khan, chose to demand it. Otherwise he was beheaded, or at least severely beaten. It was not for nothing that a thick, six-tailed knout hung above the gateway of the *Ark*, his city fortress on a hill, as a menacing symbol of power. But even his own *mullahs* were dissatisfied with this behaviour of their lord, and the courtiers carefully concealed their daughters from him.

It would hardly be surprising if, after all this, it turned out that the *paranja*, which is unique even in the Mohammedan world as a means of confining and isolating Uzbek women, had been invented as a kind of protection against these outrageous conditions, which had long been customary there.

After our expedition to the Emir's pleasure palace, we went to see the cotton *kolkhos Khakikat* (The Truth) in the neighbourhood of Bukhara, with all its rather primitive accessories, stables, sheep, cows, etc. The youthful Assolyat, whom we visited at the end, is a beauty in thoroughly Oriental style; her skin is milk-white, her cheeks like roses, and her burning eyes as black and velvety as ripe cherries, as shining as the stars in the sky on a dark night. Her eyebrows are curved in perfect form and meet in the middle, and her gait is as light and buoyant as that of a fawn. But it is hard to say which is heavier, her blue-black plaits hanging down on either side, or the Tsarist roubles braided into them. It is really a pleasure to look at this woman who, not quite two decades ago, would undoubtedly have found her way long ago to the Emir's harem, where she might have made a great career.

But to-day Assolyat sits in the doorway of her windowless clay hut in her colourful national dress, with the long, bright trousers peeping out beneath it; she is barefoot and her shoes stand neatly beside her on the ground, she wears a beautifully embroidered *ryuberyeika* on her head, and her face is framed by her great earrings of pearl and turquoise. Her hands, which, like her feet, are incredibly dirty and icy cold—for it is fairly cool here this November—and have a golden ring on each first finger, are cleaning the cotton that has just been brought in; she is a shock worker and has won a prize. Her husband is young, and is just now working somewhere else in the district, and she herself is barely twenty. At present she has no children, she has learnt to read and write and wants to go on with her studies. What more can a person want?

In the hut, where the floor is covered with beautiful, home-made carpets, there is only one *ssandal* (a basin of coal that glows in winter and by which the whole family sleeps on the ground under a single, huge, wadded coverlet), but there is also a bed, a wireless, electric light, and brightly painted china dishes on shelves, which are as popular here as in Azerbaijan by way of decorations, and beside them half a dozen packets marked "green tea." There is likewise a small mirror hanging on one of the walls with an empty scent bottle above it, and on the little table standing in front of it a half-filled scent bottle and a pot of cream.

I asked Assolyat whether she used scent. "Yes," she replied, and smiled in embarrassment. "And you have soap?" She was still more embarrassed. "No, I have run out of that." I advised her to get soap first another time, and scent only in second place. She laughed and was greatly pleased that I took a photograph of her, and at the moment I thought that perhaps she would have done better as a harem woman than a shock worker.

But then, just as we were going, she invited us in the

customary Oriental manner, her left palm gracefully pressing her left breast, to stay a little and drink a *piāla* of tea with her. I thanked her but refused, as our time was limited, but had to accept something cold. And whilst Mamli Sade seated herself comfortably cross-legged at one end of the bed, our little housewife took several rather stale, slightly mouldy flat loaves (*churek*) out of a home-made sack, none too clean, at the other end—these sacks take the place of cupboards or chests; then she produced a water-melon already affected by the winter, and, whether I would or no, I had to share the meal in order not to offend her hospitality.

As we returned the sun was already low in the sky. The air was golden pink with the fine dust that the wind brings from the desert, which settles everywhere like hoarfrost, on your clothes, hair, eyebrows, and eyelids, and makes the whole world look white. Just as elsewhere people say, "It is raining," or, "It is snowing," so here they say, "It is dusting."

We met troops of people returning to their *kishlaks* from the Bukhara bazaar, once the most colourful and interesting in the whole Islamic East. You saw whole families, lock, stock, and barrel, on one single camel or a little donkey, or an *arba*, a little, pre-historic cart with two enormous wheels. Or, again—but more rarely than in former days—the father and son in the saddle, while the mother and daughter hobbled behind on foot. Some of the men and women, even the old ones, walked barefoot and carried their shoes, tied together, over their arm or shoulder. They drove immense herds of camels or sheep before them. It was a great stream of humanity—and various animals—moving along, without beginning or end. No one knew whence they came, or whither they were going. Our motor-car excited great interest, and the desert dwellers remained standing before it, open-mouthed. But when we also stopped and I wanted to photograph the women in their husbands' presence,

they immediately covered their faces, either with the kerchiefs on their heads or with the horsehair *chachvan*, the black veil, that has not been quite abolished outside the town of Bukhara.

At last, however, we approached the city again which, with its dust-coloured, half-ruined walls, pointed arches, battlements, and towers seemed even more unreal and fragile at a distance than close at hand; these walls are built of a very porous, local clay, the so-called loess, and they seem to stretch endlessly. The town looks so ghostly, so spectral, that it seems rather a mirage of the desert than a tangible reality. And the cemeteries are curious that stretch along the clay walls; the dead were not buried beneath the earth, but in the open, surrounded by little buildings or mounds covered over with barrel-shaped vaults of stone. On account of the shortage of space they are sometimes piled up and make regular hills: most extraordinary tombs.

The living are perpetually in the open air in these very hot parts. First, the numerous craftsmen who are still divided into guilds: potters, hatters, grinders, silver, gold, and copper smiths, tailors, cobblers, makers of water-carrying vessels, and calabashes, painters, and so on. They are strictly separated according to trade, and all together strike and hammer, thrash and knead, swear and shout, often to the sound of music, and produce an infernal noise, making their wares in public in the bazaar and offering them then and there for sale.

There are crowds and hubbub and gay colours in old Bukhara, as well as round about the new cinemas, where you may see quite different colours and patterns among the crowd from those of Tashkent and Samarkand. There are a great many red robes with large flower patterns belonging to various distant mountaineers, and new colours in the *tyubetyeikas*, which always show great variety; and it all bears witness to an infallibility, a cultivation, of eye and taste such as are only found

among Orientals. Even now the greater part of life is bathed in colour, in music, in the dance, and in poetry.

That evening there was a musical and dramatic entertainment at Mamli Sade's 'Teachers' College. We glanced at it for a moment. We saw several hundred representatives of the youngest generation in Bukhara, the representatives of to-morrow and the day after to-morrow, who wanted to have a merry time after the serious work of the day. Girls and boys with happy faces were sitting unconstrainedly together, as if their world had never known an *ichkari*, a *paranja*, a *chachvan*, or an Emir's harem. They sang their new songs, accompanying them on their old native instruments; they recited their new poems, some, of course, about cotton, which they often wrote in the ancient Persian style, and on the stage they showed yesterday beside to-day.

Finally, that same evening Mamli Sade, the head of the College, danced some of her favourite dances before me whilst I squatted on a carpet on the floor beside the inevitable *dastarkhan*, the tablecloth covered with sweetmeats, and drank green tea. Several others, Uzbek women who had also been invited, played the music for her on a *dutar* (a two-stringed instrument) and a *chilmanda* (a tambourine) and set the rhythm. For each new dance she put on a native dress appropriate in colour and form, embroidered with silver and gold; yet in general she was simply dressed, though she loved beauty passionately; she was a highly bred woman, of great daring, a splendid horsewoman, as they told me, and yet thoroughly conscientious in her work and devoted to the city of Bukhara. In general she was not good-looking, but the dance transformed her utterly, gave her beauty, and exalted her to a new sphere. Everyone present was delighted, and I, too, sat entranced on my silk cushion: I now knew much better the source of the great art of Tamara Khanum and her colleagues in Tashkent.

About midnight one of the four hundred women of the Emir's harem, who had spent the evening with Mamli Sade, too, and is now married to a Soviet official, accompanied me to my *medressa*, my hotel. We walked through the inner quarter of this magical city by moonlight, threading past blank, windowless, dead walls through a labyrinth of narrow, crooked, roughly paved lanes and alleys, uphill and down.

By night Bukhara is hardly recognizable. All the contrasts, so crude and glaring by daylight, all superficial differences and the details, are wiped out by the levelling curtain of darkness: the contrast between the dying, crumbling yesterday and the to-day that is still in its birth-throes, the differences between the Emir's castle with the fissured glories of its fortifications and the new, rising state buildings, between the old dwelling houses, that seem to be of kneaded clay and air-dried bricks, themselves like little fortresses with their flat roofs between the high walls that surround them, and the new schools, clubs, and reading rooms standing out in the open, between the "Tower of Death" and the new water-tower. Only the broad lines, the dominant contours, the many horizontals and rarer verticals stand out forcibly and sharply, with almost uncanny significance against the dark blue, starry sky. And all is lapped in stillness, like the voice of Asia for thousands of years, as if there had never been such things as human hatred, oppression, war, and revolution in the world.

Before I fell asleep I asked myself once more: is this city of Bukhara dream or reality?

The journey to ASHQABAD, the capital of the Federal Republic of Turkmenistan, adjoining Uzbekistan and formerly partly included in the Emirate of Bukhara, takes twenty-four hours. That is fairly long, but not very, when you consider that the area of that country, between the Caspian Sea and the Amu Darya River, bordering on Persia and Afghanistan, is as large as

Germany, that the DESERT OF KARA KUM (Black, or Wicked, Sand) alone, three-quarters of which lies within it, has an area of over 170,000 square miles, and that it takes nearly a week to travel from Ashqabad to Moscow via Tashkent by the Central Asian Transcaspian line.

There are, of course, no express trains yet running in these out-of-the-way places. But about two hours beyond Bukhara, when you are already in Turkmenistan, you come to the town of Charijui on the oasis of the same name, whence there is already an air line northwards to the Kara Kalpak Republic, a further connection with the Federal Republic of Kazakhstan, the largest in area in Central Asia, and with the new Turko-Siberian line, the *Turksib* of which there was at one time so much talk. Here the celebrated melons, the sweetest in the whole Union and of immense size, with the fragrance of lavender, are on sale in the station itself; they are sold by men and women with white turbans, dressed in bright coloured rags, who seemed to me to belong to a new ethnical group. These are the Balukhs, whose fathers emigrated from Balukhistan in British India in Tsarist days, at the end of the last century, and came to Russia, and have been settled in this district and organized as part of the new Soviet community since 1927, when the new land and water reforms were put in force.

The three hundred odd miles which divide these people, some of them still primitive nomads, from their former home and from the state of civilization which they had reached about three decades ago, amount to at least five centuries measured in time. The women, a few of whom still wear nose-rings, but have learnt to read and write, gazed at me with childish curiosity, but without a trace of embarrassment, admired the leather tassels on my travelling shoes, and were delighted at the coloured paper bag in which I offered them sweets.

Charijui, the city of melons, is on the Amu Darya, the so-called Central Asian Volga, which rises in the icy

mountain lakes of the Afghan Pamir Plateau; on its banks are little, green oases, and it is crossed by what is still the longest bridge in the Union, built in 1900. Beyond it the landscape and the temperature of the air immediately undergo a marked change.

There was a hot dry wind, and the train puffed laboriously across a greyish yellow ocean of sand, from which rose, instead of big waves, equally big, crescent-shaped sandhills, dunes of shifting sands known as *barkhans*, with a slightly rippled surface that is always moving, in accordance with the force of the wind, changing, shifting, so that the "moving sand" threatens in time to bury the whole surroundings, including the railway. We were in the midst of the dreaded desert KARA KUM, the "destruction of caravans." As far as the eye could reach there was nothing to be seen for hours but sand and sun, sun and sand, and parched *saksaul*, the sole, wretched, leafless shrub that grows on this soil at all.

In the next carriage, where Turkmenians were already travelling, you could hear a Patephone playing one "European" foxtrot after another, as always happens on long railway journeys in the Soviet Union. But if you look out of the window, not only Europe, but every kind of life, is as far distant as if it had been swept from the earth from all eternity by the onset of the elements, leaving no trace behind.

Yet in actual fact by no means everything is as dead as it seems at a first glance in this world, so magnificent in its own way. It has plenty of poisonous snakes, a yard long, indistinguishable from the sand in colour, besides lizards, scorpions, hyenas, jackals, antelopes, and some birds. And Professor Fersmann of Leningrad has explored this boundless ocean of sand in recent years, and found as many as 100,000 living human beings far in its interior, moving like the surrounding hills, from one *taky* to another (spots where the ground is of firm clay, so that the spring water remains there).

The state in which they lived had hitherto known nothing of these people and they, for their part, had never heard anything of the Soviet Government, nor of the preceding Tsarist régime, and had no conception of money. Nay, more: although he found that 23 per cent of them were syphilitic and no fewer suffering from trachoma and leprosy, and learned that most of them died of malaria, yet they proved quite strong, and the women were particularly beautiful. The first European to cross the Kara Kum desert, also for reasons of scientific interest, and disguised as a dervish, was the Hungarian scholar Vambéry.

It is supposed that they are a Transcaspian branch of the Kazakh people, who have long been separated from the main stem. They are now being transferred from their primitive state, their utterly timeless existence, together with their half wild herds of sheep and camels, straight into the Soviet organization of wandering *kolkhoses*.

Like the sandy desert of Kara Kum and its hitherto unknown inhabitants, like its geography, so also the history of the Turkman, formerly Turanian, country has not yet been thoroughly studied, in spite of the existence of earlier reports and newer publications.* It is true that people have known since Herodotus, and from the Books of Wisdom of Zoroaster and the ancient Persian heroic epic, *Shahnama*, by Firdausi, that the regions between the Amu and Sir Darya, the Oxus and Jaxartes of antiquity, are among the oldest centres of human culture and civilization. It is true that we know that the Amu Darya flowed in the days of Tamburlaine, and even in the sixteenth century, into the Caspian Sea and not the Aral Sea, as it does to-day—the latter being, it is supposed, barely five hundred years old—so that before it was choked by the advancing sand it constituted a trade route of worldwide importance and was called "The Road of Mankind" by the Arabs, not without

cause. There is at present a bold project to restore the river's former course, which would make it possible to travel by water direct from Moscow to India through the new Volga Canal. It is true that you find old fortifications everywhere in the sand, mighty walls, ramparts, and relics of earlier drainage, all of which indicate an amazingly advanced stage of technical progress, and prove that at the time they were constructed the cultivable land cannot have been nearly so much superseded by sand as is the case now. But at present we know nothing in detail about all these changes, and the whole of this ancient region, the present-day Turkmenia, is largely still to be discovered, its history to be excavated by pre-historians out of sand-hills and by archæologists out of all manner of débris and half ruined, ancient monuments.

The train, which was like a time-machine and passed within twenty-four hours through the most various epochs, a series of thousand-year eras that have hitherto been overlooked, now approached the OASIS OF MERV, containing the ruins of the ancient city of that name, once famous throughout the world. There was again rather more life in our surroundings. On the horizon an endless chain of camels appeared, slow and weary, and at last halted at some well, almost parched with thirst; perhaps, as often happens here, the man who built it is mentioned in the melancholy women's song that reached us from another caravan, passing near the railway, its sweet pain trembling in the hot, heavy air.

In Turkmenistan, more than anywhere else in Central Asia, you realize how the whole life of the inhabitants, their existence or non-existence, depends solely upon *ssu*, water; and how the whole folk art is largely nourished and supported by it—both the lyric poetry, which is almost all the work of women, and the poetry of the carpets, that "music of the eye" which also belongs exclusively to the women's domain. It was only here, therefore, that the "marriage right to water," which we find nowhere else, even in Central Asia, and which was

such a source of misery to women, could spring up. Happily it has now been abolished once and for all.

The city of ASHQBAD, the capital of the Federal Republic of Turkmenistan, is not really a city at all when you come to examine it near at hand, but rather a big, extended *aul*, a travelling *aul* in the oasis of Tekke, left standing there since the Russian conquest in 1881. The Russian generals must have straightened out its low, mainly one-storeyed, clay houses and huts with their rulers a little, and provided it with streets and avenues as straight as a die.

The southern end of all the streets looks straight upon the lower spurs of Kopet Dagħ on the near Persian frontier, gleaming purple and with a sprinkling of snow on its peaks. Here tall, slender men and women pace with calm, assured gait, without the smallest haste; they have for the most part delicately cut features, magnificent eyes—narrow, slanting “Kalmuck eyes” and flat noses are regarded as ugly here—and fine, noble figures. Some of the women wear the native dress, a long, loose garment like a shirt of home-woven red silk, and the breast adorned with as many metal pendants, medals, coins, and chains as possible; underneath are trousers reaching to the ankles, and on the head a tiara often as much as twenty inches high, a hat that is likewise richly adorned with metalwork, coloured stones, and a coloured veil, with a large pattern, hanging down the back. The hat, known as *buruk*, is very heavy and unhealthy, weighing not infrequently some twenty-five pounds, forcing the head backwards, and sometimes causing injury to the spine. But merely to look at it is very beautiful and gives its wearers a proud, queenly demeanour. The men wear dark, rather close-fitting *khalats*, tall black or white sheepskin caps, and long boots with fairly high heels. People here like adornment that adds to the appearance of height and produces a proud, imposing impression. It is true that you now see

more and more European dress, far less becoming and not so pretty.

All these men and women belong to the various Turkman tribes, some still living in gentile organization—the Tekke, Yomuds, Salors, and others—in whose veins a good deal of Persian blood flows. In former days they lived almost entirely by war and pillage, and as they have not been settled long, and some are not yet, many of them naturally look with some astonishment at all the new schools, colleges, factories, Soviet offices, and the House of the Peasant Woman, all built in the modern style, and at the motor bus that plies in the town—in short, at the many strange, unaccustomed buildings whose inmates talk, it is true, a great deal of the “Bolshevik pace,” but nevertheless have an immense deal of time left over from their past in the sandy desert in most cases. In fact nothing is swift in this exceedingly dusty town except the breakneck cyclists who make the streets unsafe and cause the passing camels and donkeys to shy, riding in great cavalcades as they do nowhere else in Central Asia.

As always among nomads, the women were allowed to go about with uncovered faces, and were only required to cover their mouths, their charming smile, carefully with the *yashmak*, the end of the kerchief or veil, as a sign of humility. Though they were priced exceptionally high, because they are in the minority here, they had until recently to suffer all the cruelties of the patriarchy. Nowadays there are a number of women officials in this “town of love” (the translation of the name Ashqabad), doctors, agriculturists, engineers, heads of factories, teachers, and so on.

Several miles from Ashqabad, near the *aul* of Kushi, I visited a Turkman kindergarten associated with a school for beginners. A Russian Jewess was head of this “Children’s Commune,” who has buried herself in the sandy desert here for nearly fifteen years. She is one of those quiet heroines who are bringing civilization to

Central Asia, and of whom I have already said much in this book. In her really exemplary home, which would be a credit to any Western European town, she is working with a degree of love and devotion that deserve unbounded admiration to teach Turkman children to wash themselves, to brush their teeth, to read and write, to draw, to drill, to make music, to model in clay, to sing, and even to learn rhythmical gymnastics and speaking in choirs.

Only a few years ago you might have seen these five or six dozen little things running about in the desert utterly neglected, bristling with dirt, suffering from rickets and trachoma; 56 per cent of them retain a flattened skull from lying in their *bishiks*, cradles that are a mockery to every notion of hygiene.

And so a little girl of seven in this school wrote an essay on "Children's Thoughts about Lenin" as follows:

Lenin is the greatest man. He gave poor people a doctor and medicine, so that they might not fall sick.

And another little girl added:

Lenin is dead, but we have his picture. He gave water and land to the poor people, but to us tea and white *churek* (flat loaves).

Yet side by side with this altogether modern cult of the kindergarten the old life continues on its old, beaten way, as everywhere in the Soviet East. For instance, whilst I was rejoicing in the chubby, merry children in this school, which is run, in the main, on Montessori lines, a wedding was being celebrated in the *aul* close by, and celebrated according to the ancient, ancient custom, although the bride had recently been a pupil in this very school and was barely twelve years old. I, too, was invited to the wedding.

In the midst of a spacious, uneven courtyard of sand stood a large dungheap covered with a number of

magnificent carpets. Round this centre the men principally were grouped, young and old, mostly wearing their white fur caps in honour of the festival, and indistinguishable from one another in bearing, gait, and movements, even in the saddle. Whilst many of them were taking great trouble to control and curb their excited horses—Akh-al-Tekke thoroughbreds from the stud not far away, celebrated for their beauty—and whilst dozens of camels, festively adorned but entirely indifferent, yawned appallingly shrill and loud, the other men drank their tea quite comfortably.

But all round stood a whole host of women from the neighbourhood, forming a double row and leaving only quite a small space open for entrance. Many of them were very beautiful, although they had, perhaps, never washed, with their sad eyes, as of Byzantine Madonnas, and their long robes, scarlet and wine red, though often faded, their tall crowns shimmering with silver and gold and precious stones, resembling queens, although they were all hung about with babies and children, like heavy, ripe grapes. In these parts the smallest girls are dressed like their magnificent mothers, except for a different headdress, and the latter do not take off their fine clothes even when they do housework, often not even when they go to bed.

Everybody was waiting eagerly for what was to come, with shining eyes, waiting for the constant new arrivals among the guests, who came one after another from the bridegroom's *aul*, fairly deep "in the sand." Some approached with rhythmic majesty on their high, four-legged ships of the deserts, the wives enthroned behind their husbands, and whilst they alighted with graceful movements from the camel's humps the usually plebeian animals dropped chivalrously on their knees. Some came galloping on their swift, thoroughbred horses, and some like a whirlwind on their bicycles. One hardly knew where to look first. For the whole scene under the open, azure sky, in brilliant sunshine, is such as hardly

any stage manager or film producer, whether in Europe or America, could conceive, so grand, so varied, so harmonious in composition, so perfect in colour and form.

But inside, in the unsightly clay hut that belonged to all this and struck me as bare and cold, crouched a poor little trembling girl, hardly more than a child, though of course her age had been given as sixteen (the age of consent for women throughout the Soviet East). She sat on a carpet, invisible from outside, beneath a blanket that she had made with her own hands, turned her face to the wall, and cried quietly to herself for grief and fear.

But shortly afterwards the bride was carried out into the courtyard like a living parcel, together with her carpet, which a number of older women held at all four corners.

Several of the nearest relatives of the bridegroom who were present rushed up to the women and pretended to be going to snatch the bride from their hands. There was a short mock struggle, a relic of the time, by no means far distant, when the men in these parts were in the habit of kidnapping their wives ruthlessly. The final scene was the men throwing rouble pieces at the women, quite a number of them, showering the *kalym* upon them, and so buying the girl from them, so to speak.

The bride, more dead than alive, for she may eat nothing all day, now wrapped like a parcel in the blanket and carpet almost to the point of suffocation, was placed on a camel that was standing ready, possibly behind her elder brother, and the young thing, already quite abandoned, rode at the head of the newly formed cavalcade, which started to move forwards slowly and solemnly, on to a totally new, unknown life in an absolutely strange *aul*. There a *mullah* would perhaps complete the brief formalities. The Turkmans are nominally Mohammedans, but in fact they do not trouble themselves about a single commandment of the *Koran*. There followed a great banquet, of which, however, the bridegroom did not partake that day, and

afterwards the new marriage might be registered at the *Sags*, the registrar's office, according to Soviet law.

In the Caucasus and in Uzbekistan, and elsewhere in Central Asia, such a wedding would be celebrated with much more music and dancing. But curiously enough, the Turkmans have no dances. They do, indeed, love music and song, a very strange music in which the performers burst into tears, begin to tremble, and sit rapt, and which really sounds as if it were not produced with ordinary strings, but with their own nerves and their heart's blood. But hitherto they have been denied the music of the body, the plastic art of physical form, as it is devotedly cherished and cultivated, and developed to a high pitch, among their nearest neighbours, the Uzbeks and Caucasians. And yet the Turkmans have a great sense of beauty and of the expressive powers of the human body, of suppleness and buoyancy, a love of contests and races. Involuntarily we ask ourselves the reason for this strange fact, which even applies to the women here. Is it because the nomad women on their perpetual wanderings through the desert found no time to cultivate the art, unlike the leisured urban Uzbek women, immured in their *ichkaris*? Or because they could give expression to their whole soul, all their unlived women's lives, in their carpets, their "music for the eye"? It is a riddle that calls for further investigation.

In the State Carpet Association, with a membership already of about 30,000 carpet weavers, I was shown an immense store of the loveliest carpets, old and new, famous Tekke carpets and others, with and without the "Rose of Ssalor." It was an intoxicating orgy of colour, transitions, and shades, warm and deep, with a Rembrandt-like glow, penetrating to the very soul, impossible to describe more fully. It was, indeed, music and balm for the eye.

* An old, wrinkled Turkman woman explained to me all these effusions and secrets of the Turkman female

soul ; she was very active, and must have been beautiful in her youth ; her eyes were still youthful and burning, and she not only guarded all the precious treasures, but knew each smallest piece inside and out and loved them passionately, like her own children ; she was intoxicated by her love. I probably learned more from her than I could from most specialized works on the art of carpet weaving, and far more than from any Western European museum collection of the kind.

But when the woman showed me a mural hanging, as one of the newest developments, showing one of the Soviet Marshals on horseback in uniform, it was like a cold douche, and I was somewhat anxious about the future of this pure and exalted art.

When she was still young, the Yomud girl *Karajayeva*, with the pretty first name Nuri, meaning " delicate pink of the cheek," was sold to an old man for no more than seventeen camels—ridiculously cheap, when one remembers that women are in the minority in Turkmenia and not infrequently secured the market price of sixty camels or more. Her father was a one-armed cleaner of drains, and therefore very poor. The old man carried her away to Persia, and would rather have murdered her than give her up. She is now Public Prosecutor in the Federal Republic of Turkmenia. She studied together with her mother, who came to Moscow in 1921 as a delegate with ninety other women from all over Central Asia, and was one of the nine chosen ones to be invited to visit Lenin. When I asked her what had made the strongest impression on her during her stay in Moscow, she gave the same answer, with a little confusion, that I had often received from other Central Asian women : it was the lift that carried her up to Lenin and the *samovar* with which you could make tea without fire (the electric kettle). Nuri, her daughter, who is now married again, told me, indeed, that " there was nobody in the world better off than herself," but when we drove

up to the front door of her pleasant house in the car, a pretty, but dirty, little boy of three rushed up to her and began to sob bitterly. "Look, this is my little son, a regular *besprisorniy* (neglected child),"—the words escaped from her maternal heart. "My household help is busy all day, so that the little fellow is quite left to himself."

In the inner courtyard, which we now entered, sat a young man with a baby in his arms ; it was her husband's brother with her second child, now eleven months old. The elder one, who knew from experience that his mother would soon run away again, cried pitifully, bitterly, and clung with all his might to her dress so as to hold her fast. And the poor woman herself, who really had only a bare twenty minutes for herself and her maternal duties, was in despair too, and not far from tears.

I took leave of the three, and tried to picture to myself how much better it would be for this wife and mother, if she could often escape for an afternoon from the dusty, waterless town, unbearably hot and glowing like a furnace in summer and without even a bathing place, and go with her children to the cool mountains, to the summer resort Firuza, some twenty-six miles from Ashqabad ; but the life she was now living strained her strength to the utmost and left her no time for such things.

Firuza is a famous health resort on Kopet Dagh, all modern summer villas and gardens, and so near the Persian frontier that, when a tractor was first brought there, the foreign frontier guards threw down their rifles and ran across to Soviet territory to look at the new wonder at close quarters. But half-way from Ashqabad to Firuza, near the *aul* of Bagir, you stop to see a sight of quite another kind : the remains of the ancient Parthian capital Nessa, now being dug out of a grassgrown hill. The town is not, indeed, nearly as old as the dead city of Annan, now buried in sand, also near

Ashqabad, but in another direction, which was said to have been inhabited in the time of the Sumerians, that is between six and seven thousand years ago. Still, it is worth seeing.

But Firuza is likewise of interest in another respect, that has nothing to do with cultural geography ; it is said to have been called after a Kurdish woman who was a general in these parts before the Russian invasion ; and besides a " Virgin's Tower," like that in Baku, there is what was once known as the " Virgin's Fortress " in the ravine near by of the same name. I was also told that among the Kurds living there, as well as among certain scattered Turkman tribes, it is still the mother, not the father, who exercises supreme authority, as in former days, and that her word is law ; that the mother's brother is an important personage ; that in the mass dances, in which the men, too, take part, the women are always the leaders—and of that I convinced myself at the Olympiad in Baku ; that they can be village headmen, and that they fought bravely in the civil war in men's clothes, but also invariably in earlier wars.

When we reflect on all this, and that it was here that I heard the fine old proverb, which is yet living : " A woman's complaints are not bound to earth, but rise to heaven ; and if the injury is too great, she may go direct to God with her complaint," the question arises spontaneously whether new facts about the history of matriarchy might not be unearthed here, from the ruins in the sand, besides various essential facts about the history of Turan.

Far more than Ashqabad, which has neither history nor traditions, the city of MERV would be fitted to be a symbol, representative, and centre of the ancient civilized land of the Turkmans. For it carries on the traditions of the ancient city of the same name, the Margiana of classical antiquity, which, according to an old Persian legend, was established by the god Ormuzd as a " place of superfluity," conquered by Alexander the Great in

the fourth century B.C., occupied by Nestorians in the fourth century A.D., though they were later compelled to yield to Mohammedan pressure, and afterwards known, together with Baghdad, as one of the largest towns in the Orient, having a million inhabitants, when it was the capital of the Perso-Arabian kingdom of Khorasan.

All that now remains of this one-time "world wonder," which was finally destroyed by its latest conqueror, the Emir of Bukhara, in 1795, is a pile of ruins, about nineteen square miles in area, grouped round the vast mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar (twelfth century), the best preserved of its former architectural wonders of all epochs and faiths ; it is the largest ruin in all Central Asia.

But New MERV, founded in the last century, is now springing up near the old ruins and constantly spreading, and all around it are *kolkhoses*, often managed by women. In one of these *kolkhoses* an old body who had just learnt to read and write told me that youth had only just come to her now that she was old. Near by my guide, the Turkman poet, Berdi Sultan Niasov, who looks like a prince from *The Arabian Nights*, showed me as we passed the place where, as a little boy, he had run about barefoot as a herdsman. But New Merv itself, the town, is the centre of the native model schools, the new schools of carpet weaving, with their women's hostels, the reading rooms, clubs, Red Corners, children's crèches, out-patients' departments, cinemas, and all the new life, besides a fragment of the old.

In the bazaar, one of the largest and most characteristic in Central Asia, sit the Turkmans like stone idols, generally on the carpets that are spread out for sale, and are sharply distinguished according to families by their ornamentation and colour ; they sit and look down on all the other peoples because they hold their own, and especially the Tekke tribe, to be the supreme "race"—so, at least, their neighbours declare. The bazaar, with

its caravans that seem to date from biblical days, and the bronzed, white-bearded patriarchs that go with them, extends far beyond the town among the shifting sand, and, with its many nations and tribes, it is really a gigantic international club for Asiatics. And whilst the blind old *jarchi*, the market crier, threaded his way slowly and cautiously through it all with a little guide, whilst he proclaimed the latest decrees and ordinances of the Soviet Government in a feeble voice that seemed to come from another world, or announced that the agricultural expert had a good bull for the *dekhkans'* cows, or that Citizen Yash Sultan in the *kishlak* of Mamash had lost a white *ishak*, a donkey, I took leave of all Central Asia at the microphone in the adjacent transmitting station, of all its thousands of years that still live, of its yesterday and to-day, but chiefly of its women, its humanity, and thanked every one of them for all the unforgettable things that I had experienced, for the inner enrichment that had come to me.

And now, after taking leave of the women of the East through the wireless near Merv, one of the oldest centres of civilization in the world, I take leave of them in this book, adding a few words for them and for the women—and men—of the rest of the world.

The fabulous lands of Central Asia, the lands of *The Arabian Nights*, called "the heart of Islam" in the fifteenth century under the Timurids, have awakened from the sleep of centuries.

The women of the East, too, have re-entered the living world, after a thousand years without history. Placed on an equality with men, they, too, now climb the Pamir, "the roof of the world." Far below lies the Garden of Eden, the Paradise of the first human couple. But to-day the world is truly no Paradise.

These women are born into a highly political era, and move in a greatly over-heated atmosphere which

forces their hitherto fallow powers, their hitherto formless minds, along a definite line, and compels them to definite, foreseen achievements.

And so the difficult task fell to my lot, in this monograph on a phase of cultural history ending, as I mentioned at the outset, with the year 1936, of showing the women of the East in the political framework actually existing ; yet I did not want to write a political book, and I trust that I have not done so.

It would be idle to prophesy how their path, the conditions of their lives, will develop in the immediate or more distant future, and that is not my intention, nor is it within my power. But one thing we may take for granted : whatever may change in the new world of the women of the Soviet East, the wheel of history, how that it has once begun to revolve, cannot be stopped ; it is a law of nature that it should continue.

Mighty things are happening on Mother Asia's soil. And the time may not be far distant when that venerable continent, so long far removed from the centre of world events, will again intervene actively in the history of the human race. But then the women of the East, who are certainly not the last to share in the renaissance, will surely join with all the other women on earth to help build a future that will, we hope, be better than the past.

INTERPRETATION OF NAMES AND ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Adat</i>	The unwritten common law of the Islamic peoples of Central Asia and the mountain tribes of the Caucasus.
<i>Arba</i>	A small, old-fashioned cart with two enormous wheels in Central Asia and the Caucasus.
<i>Aryk</i>	An artificial irrigation channel in Central Asia.
<i>Aul</i>	A settlement in the Caucasus Mountains, and also in Central Asia.
<i>Bazaar</i>	A market in the East.
<i>Bey</i>	(From the Turkish <i>bey</i> meaning "lord.") In the Soviet East a large landowner, cattle-breeder, wholesale merchant.
<i>Bishtik</i>	Cradle in Central Asia.
<i>Byt</i>	(Russian) Being, existence, manner of existence.
<i>Chachvan</i>	Black horsehair net for covering the face in Central Asia.
<i>Chaikhana</i>	Tea-room in Central Asia.
<i>Chum</i>	Pointed tent of the Siberian nomad peoples.
<i>Dekhlan</i>	Peasant in Central Asia.
<i>Ichkari</i>	The women's half of the house among the Uzbeks, the inner courtyard.
<i>Ishak</i>	Donkey.
<i>Katym</i>	The purchase price of the bride in the East.
<i>Khalat</i>	Upper garment.
<i>Khudshum</i>	Attack, applied to the campaign against the veil in the Russian East.
<i>Kolkhas</i>	(Russian abbreviation.) Collective farm.
<i>Komssomol</i>	(Russian abbreviation.) Communist Youth League.
<i>Komssomolets</i>	(Russian abbreviation.) Communist youth.
<i>Komssomolka</i>	(Russian abbreviation.) Girl Communist.
<i>Likbes</i>	(Russian abbreviation.) Liquidation of illiteracy.
<i>Medi'essa</i>	Islamic religious academy, university.
<i>Mullah</i>	Islamic divine, scholar.
<i>Paranja</i>	Upper garment among the Uzbek women (and some Tajik women), falling from the head and covering the whole figure.
<i>Piala</i>	Tea-cup without a handle.
<i>Registan</i>	Market-place in Central Asia.
<i>Sags</i>	(Russian abbreviation.) Registrar's office.
<i>Shariat</i>	The written law of the Islamic peoples.
<i>Shenokdyel</i>	(Russian abbreviation.) Women's Section.
<i>Ssandal</i>	A basin of coal kept constantly glowing in winter in Central Asia.
<i>Tovarishch</i>	(Russian.) Comrade.

<i>Tsik</i>	(Russian abbreviation.) Central Executive Committee.
<i>Tyubetyika</i>	Central Asian embroidered cap.
<i>Ulus</i>	Village, settlement, territorial administrative unit in Yakutsk and the Kalmuck Republic.
<i>Vtsik</i>	(Russian abbreviation.) Executive Committee of the whole Union.
<i>Yurta</i>	Nomad tent.

ETHNOGRAPHICAL, STATISTICAL, AND POLITICAL GLOSSARY

THE Soviet Union (U.S.S.R.), covering an area of 8,095,728 square miles, and having more than 170 million inhabitants, consists at the present time of eleven FEDERATED REPUBLICS. These are the RUSSIAN Federal Soviet Socialist Republic (R.S.F.S.R.), the UKRAINIAN S.S.R., the WHITE RUSSIAN S.S.R., the GEORGIAN (Grusian) S.S.R., the ARMENIAN S.S.R., the TURKMAN S.S.R., the UZBEK S.S.R., the TAJIK S.S.R., the KAZAKH S.S.R., the KIRGHIZ S.S.R., and the Azerbaijan S.S.R.

There are, moreover, a number of AUTONOMOUS REPUBLICS within the Federal Republics, also AUTONOMOUS REGIONS, REGIONS, PROVINCES, and DISTRICTS, of which only those outside Europe are here enumerated. The essentially largest of the Federal Republics, situated partly in Europe, is the R.S.F.S.R., with an area of 6,368,768 square miles (twice as large as the whole of Europe), embracing 17 Autonomous Republics, 5 Provinces, 6 Autonomous Regions, and 19 Regions, and, according to a census taken in January, 1933, having a population of 105,179,000. All other population statistics are based on the census of 1926, for the figures of the census of January, 1937, are not available in detail, and, moreover, are said to have shown no important changes.

ABKHAZ Aut. Republic: high, mountainous country situated on the Black Sea, the Colchis of antiquity, belonging to the Republic of Georgia. Capital, SUKHUM (a very ancient port). Area, 3,470 square miles. Population, 231,000. The Abkhazians, or Abasas, who call themselves the "Apsua," or soul people, are an indigenous Caucasian stock akin to the Cherkesses, and have been Mohammedans since the fifteenth century. Marr classes the Abasas language as belonging to the Japhetic family, and it is closely cognate with Cherkessian. The land has been sovietized since 1921.

ADYGEI Aut. Region: in the Northern Caucasus, formerly Cherkessia. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital, KRASNODAR. Area, 1,158 square miles. Population, 130,000, the larger part Adygei Cherkesses, an indigenous Caucasian people, akin to the Abasas. Formerly they were converted to Christianity, but in the seventeenth century went over to Islam. Sovietized since 1922.

AJAR Aut. Republic: on the Black Sea, adjoining Turkey on the south. Part of the Federal Republic of Georgia. Capital, BATUM, one of the principal ports of the Union. Area, 1,158 square miles. Population, 147,000. Mohammedan, and assimilated to Turkey since the seventeenth century. Sovietized since 1921.

ARMENIA, Federal Republic: one of the three Transcaucasian republics which constituted a Federation till 1936. Capital, ERIVAN. Area, 11,568 square miles. Population, 1,014,000. The Armenians are one of the oldest

civilized peoples in the world, belonging to the Indo-European language group. Sovietized since 1920.

AZERBAIJAN, Federal Republic: on the Caspian Sea, adjoining Persia on the south, one of the three Transcaucasian republics which constituted a Federation till 1936. Capital, BAKU. Area, 32,056 square miles. Population, 2,578,000. The inhabitants are a Turkish mixed race (some of the "Caucasian Mountain Jews" live here). Azerbaijan is one of the most important industrial countries in the Union (oil and cotton). It embraces the Autonomous Republic of Nakhichevan and the Autonomous Region of NAGORNI KARABAKH. Sovietized since 1920.

BASHKIR Aut. Republic: in the Ural area. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital UFA. Area, 58,700 square miles. Population, 3,005,000. The Bashkirs are Turks with an admixture of Mongol and Finnish blood, and have been settled in their present home since the ninth century. For the most part settled cattle-breeders and arable farmers. Sovietized since 1919.

BURIAT MONGOL Aut. Republic: on Lake Baikal. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital ULAN UDA. Area, 145,100 square miles. Population, 572,000. A Mongol people, still living partly in gentile organization, and professing partly Shamanism, partly Lamaism. Settled arable farmers and also nomad shepherds. Sovietized since 1923.

CHECHENO-INGUSH Aut. Republic: in the Northern Caucasus, on the middle reaches of the River Terek. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital, GROZNY. Area, 6,180 square miles. Population, 618,000. The Chechens and Ingushes are two indigenous Caucasian peoples, among whom we still find relics of tribal organization. Sovietized since 1922.

CHEKES Aut. Region: in the Northern Caucasus. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital, BATALPASHINSK. Area, 1,158 square miles. Population, 79,000. One of the Japhetic peoples native to the Caucasus. The majority of them were forced to emigrate to Turkey after the Tsarist conquest, and they live scattered over the Balkans, in Asia Minor, and in Syria. Sovietized since 1926.

DAGHESTAN, Aut. Republic: in the Eastern Caucasus on the Caspian Sea. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital, MAKHACH KALA. Area, 22,000 square miles. Population, 912,000, indigenous Caucasian peoples, Lesghians, Turks, Mountain Jews, and others. The name Daghestan means "Land of Mountains," but there was a time when the country was called the "Mountain of Peoples," because it was inhabited by more than eighty peoples with more than thirty languages. Sovietized since 1921.

GEORGIA (Grusinia), Federal Republic: on the shores of the Black Sea. One of the three Transcaucasian republics which formed a Federation till 1936. Capital TIFLIS. Area, 26,865 square miles. Population, 2,925,000, mainly Georgians. Georgia is a country of ancient Christian civilization. The Georgians are a typical indigenous Caucasian people, made up of a number of tribes, including the Svanetians, Khevsurs, Pshavs, and others. Georgia embraces the Autonomous ABKHAZ and AJAR Republics and the Autonomous Region of SOUTH OSSETIA. Sovietized since 1921.

KABARD-BALKAR Aut. Republic: in the Northern Caucasus, at the foot of the highest peaks of the range. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital, Nalchik. Area, 4,640 square miles. Population, 231,000. The great majority are Kabards, a Cherkess people, formerly the leading civilized people among the Caucasian mountaineers. Sovietized since 1921.

KALMUCK Aut. Republic: north of the Caspian Sea. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital, ELISTA, formerly Astrakhan. Area, 28,590 square miles. Population, 192,000. The Kalmucks are a Mongol people who came from Central Asia in the seventeenth century and settled in the neighbourhood of the Volga mouth. The majority of them still live in Mongolia and Western China. Most of them are nomad shepherds, and they live in a complex tribal organization. Lamaists. Sovietized since 1920.

KARA-KALPAK Aut. Republic: round the delta of the Amu Darya on the Aral Sea. Part of the Federal Republic of Uzbekistan. Capital, NUKUS. Area, 48,650 square miles. Population, 351,000, mainly Kara-Kalpaks, of Turkish origin. There are 925 women to every 1,000 men. In part still nomads. Sovietized since 1924.

KAZAKHSTAN, Federal Republic: on the central Asiatic steppes, stretching from the Volga delta across the desert of Ksyl Kum (Red Sand), the Western Siberian plain, the Aral Sea, and the Altai Mountains, to the Chinese frontier. Capital, ALMA ATA. Area, 1,047,797 square miles. Population, 7,821,000, formerly known as Kirghiz Cossacks. The Kazakhs, the most numerous of the Turkish peoples in the Union, are mainly Mohammedan, and are nomad shepherds. Tribal organization and the patriarchy still in considerable vigour. Sovietized since 1924.

KIRGHIZ Federal Republic: in the southern part of what was formerly Turkistan, on the lower slopes of the Tien Shan and Pamir Alai, on the borders of Chinese Turkistan. Capital, FRUNZE. Area, 75,926 square miles. Population, 1,127,000. The Kirghiz, formerly known as the Kara-Kirghiz, are an indigenous Turkish people of Central Asia. For the most part they are still nomads and living in tribal organization. Sunnite Mohammedans. Sovietized since 1924.

NAGORNI KARABAKH Aut. Region: Part of the Federal Republic of Azerbaijan. Capital, SYFANAKERT. Area, 1,545 square miles. Population, 128,000 almost entirely Armenians. Sovietized since 1923.

NAKHICHIVAN, Aut. Republic: Part of the Federal Republic of Azerbaijan. Capital, NAKHICHEVAN. Area, 1,930 square miles. Population, 112,000, principally Turks.

OSSETIA, NORTH OSSETIA, Aut. Republic: in the northern Caucasus. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital, ORJONIKDZE, formerly Vladikavkas, that is, "Mistress of the Caucasus." Area, 2,320 square miles. Population, 179,000. The Ossete language belongs to the Iranian branch of Indo-European, and is cognate with the language of the ancient Sarmatæ and Scythians. Sovietized since 1922.

OSSETIA, SOUTH OSSETIA, Aut. Region: part of the Federal Republic of Georgia. Capital, STALINIR. Area, 1,545 square miles. Population, 94,000, mainly Ossetes.

RUSSIAN SOVIET FEDERAL SOCIALIST REPUBLIC: capital, Moscow. Area, 6,368,768 square miles. Population, 105,179,000. Comprising 17 Autonomous Republics, 6 Autonomous Regions, and 19 Regions.

TAJIKIA or TAJIKISTAN, Federal Republic: in Central Asia, in the Pamir, Alai, and Hindu Kush area, on the borders of Afghanistan. Capital, STALINOBAD. Area, 55,040 square miles. Population, 1,200,000. The Tajiks are a settled people, originally Iranian, whose language is closely cognate with Persian. They cultivate the land and breed cattle. Tajikistan embraces the Autonomous Region of MOUNT BADAKHSHAN. Sovietized since 1924.

TURKMENIA or **TURKMENISTAN**, Federal Republic: in Central Asia stretching from the Caspian Sea across the desert of Kara Kum (Black or Wicked, Sand) to the Persian and Afghan frontiers. Capital, **ASHGABAD**. Area, 171,384 square miles. Population, 1,182,000. The Turkmenians are an indigenous Turkish people, in part still nomads. In general they are divided into tribes. Cattle breeding, cotton planting, and carpet weaving (exclusively women's work). Sovietized since 1924.

UZBEKISTAN, Federal Republic: in Central Asia, between Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, including part of the valley of Ferghana. Formerly "the Heart of Turkistan." Capital, **TASHKENT**. Area, 66,392 square miles. Population, 4,920,000. The country consists of deserts and oases (artificial irrigation), including ancient centres of civilization like Samarkand and Bukhara. Uzbekistan stands first in the Union as a "cotton Republic." The Uzbeks, formerly also called Sarts, are a mixed Turkish people, some of whom are still nomads living in tribal organization. In no Islamic country were women so oppressed and immured as here. Sovietized since 1924.

UROTE Aut. Region: in the Altai Mountains. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital, **UROT TURA**. Area, 36,300 square miles. Population, 118,000. The Urotes, or Altaians, are mixed peoples, partly of Turkish, partly Mongol, origin. Semi-nomad shepherds, some still living in gentile organization. Sovietized since 1922.

YAKUT Aut. Republic: in North-Eastern Siberia. Part of the R.S.F.S.R. Capital, **YAKUTSK**. Area, 1,188,000 square miles (the largest and most thinly populated of the Autonomous Soviet Republics). Population 316,000, mainly Yakuts of Turko-Tatar origin. The Yakuts are regarded as the most numerous, most active, and hardiest of the Northern Asiatic peoples. They are for the most part settled cattle breeders, in the process of transition to arable farming. They also breed reindeer and go fur hunting. The bones of mammoths are found in their country. In Tsarist days it was the place of banishment for political offenders. Sovietized since 1922.

All the Federal Republics, Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Regions, etc., enumerated above are inhabited, as I have already indicated, not only by the indigenous races after whom they are generally named, but also by numerous other peoples, of which there are nearly two hundred in all in the U.S.S.R. I will give some account of a few of these, who either live scattered among the others, or, as so-called "pure nationalities," have not yet been delimited territorially, but who are mentioned in this book. They are principally in the north and north-east of Asia.

ALEUTS, some 350 in number (the majority are in the United States, on the Aleutian Islands), live east of Kamchatka, on the Commander Islands in the Pacific. Chiefly marine hunters. Their language is cognate with that of the North American Indians.

CHUKCHES, about 13,000, in the extreme north-east of Asia, principally near Cape Chukotsk, in the Chukotsk national territory, on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. Their chief centre, **UELLEN**, has a wireless transmitting station. Some are nomad breeders of reindeer and dogs, some partially settled fishermen and fur and marine hunters. Profess animism and Shamanism. Still live in gentile organization, frequently combined with group marriage. Wives are often acquired by barter, or by service with the future father-in-law.

EVENKS, formerly **TUNGUSKS**, about 38,000, mainly in the Evenk national territory, and also scattered throughout Eastern Siberia as far as the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk. They belong to the largest group of the Tungus-Manchurian lingual family. They are divided into various tribes, some of which are found in the north of Manchuria, in Outer Mongolia, and in Chinese Turkistan, under a variety of names. For the most part they are nomad breeders of reindeer and fur hunters. Profess Shamanism.

ⁱ KHANTS, formerly **OSTIAKS**, about 22,000, living in the north of the Ural area and in the Western Siberian taiga and tundra (primeval forest and moss-covered ground) in the Ostiak and Vogul national territory. They belong to the Ugro-Finnish group and are divided into a number of tribes. Semi-nomad fur and marine hunters. Shamanists with traces of Greek Orthodoxy. Their language is regarded as cognate with Hungarian.

MANSI, formerly **VOGULS**, about 5,700, living in the Ostiak and Vogul national territory, belonging to the Ugro-Finnish racial group. Semi-nomad shepherds, fishermen, and fur hunters. The language of the Voguls, like that of the Ostiaks, is cognate with Hungarian. Primitive customs still observed. Bear festivals are celebrated and masked shows performed.

NENTSI, formerly **SAMOYEDES**, about 17,500, living partly in the European north of the Union, above Arkhangelsk, partly in the north and north-east of Siberia, their language cognate with the Ugro-Finnish. In Tsarist days "in process of dying out." Nomad breeders of reindeer, fishermen, and fur hunters. Strongly influenced by Shamanism.

NIJUKH, formerly **GILIAKS**, about 4,000, in Eastern Siberia, in the Amur territory, and the northern part of Sakhalin, belonging to the so-called Palaeo-Asiatic group of the oldest inhabitants of Siberia. Principally nomad fishermen, fur and marine hunters, and dog breeders. Travel with dog teams. Profess Shamanism, and are in some cases Greek Orthodox in a purely external sense. Bear cult and burning of the dead.

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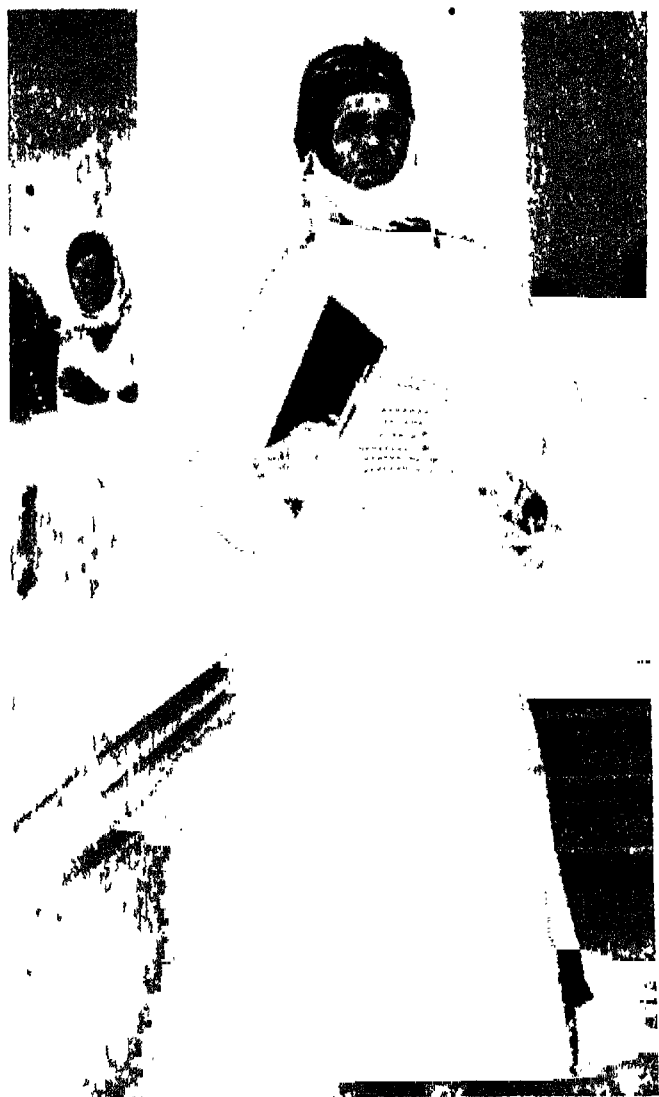
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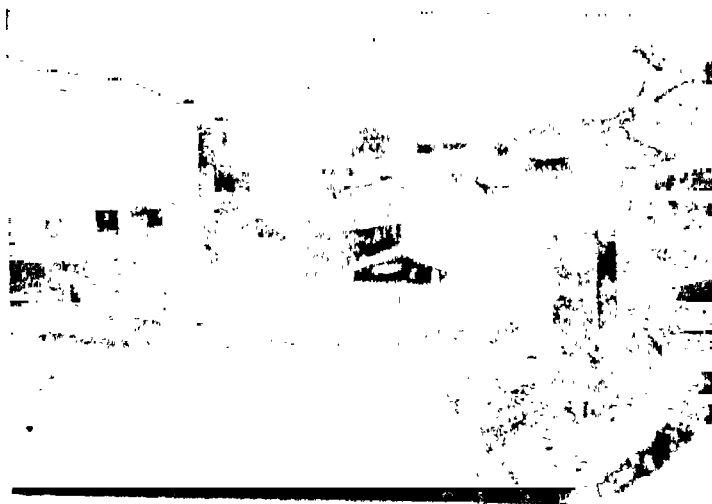
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1. Kurdish Woman Organizer in Erivan, Armenia



2 The Darjal Ravine and Grusinian Military Road in the Caucasus



3 View of a Svanetan settlement (Transcaucasia)



4 «Lenin and the Peoples of the East» (Azerbaijani-Turkish trystiy in the Museum of Eastern Culture in Moscow)



5 Likbes (Liquidation of Illiteracy) in the Northern Caucasus



6 Delegates at a Womens' Conference in the Cultural Palace
of Emancipated Turkish Womanhood at Baku

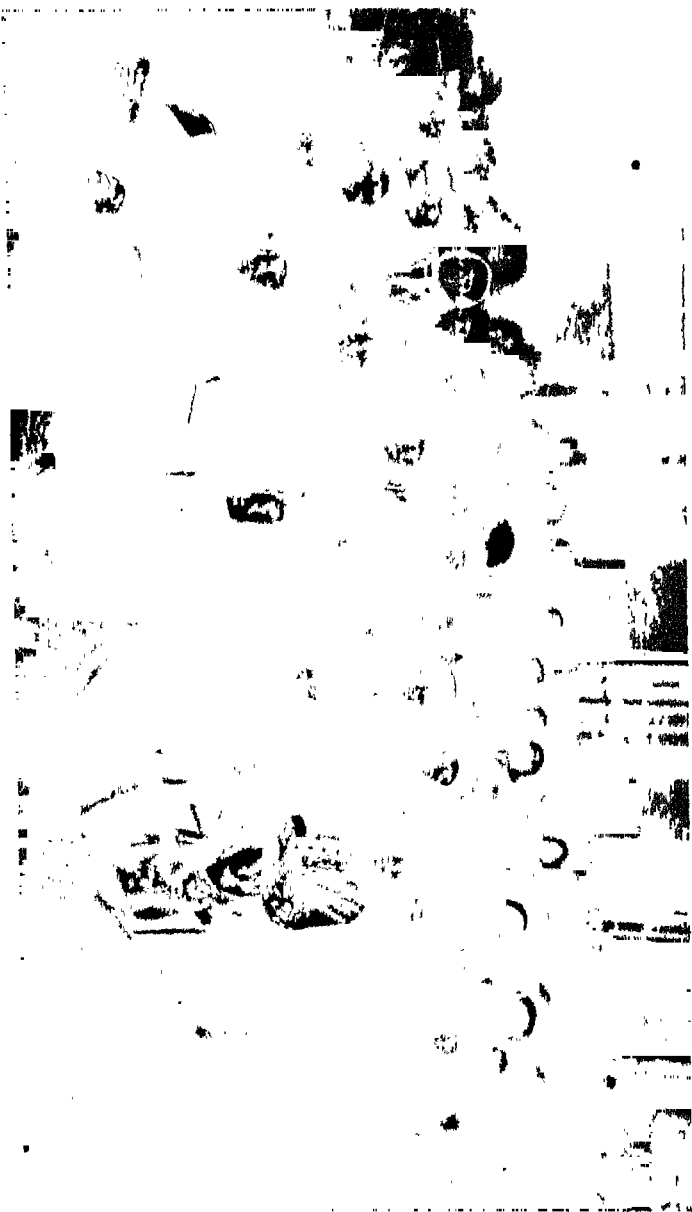


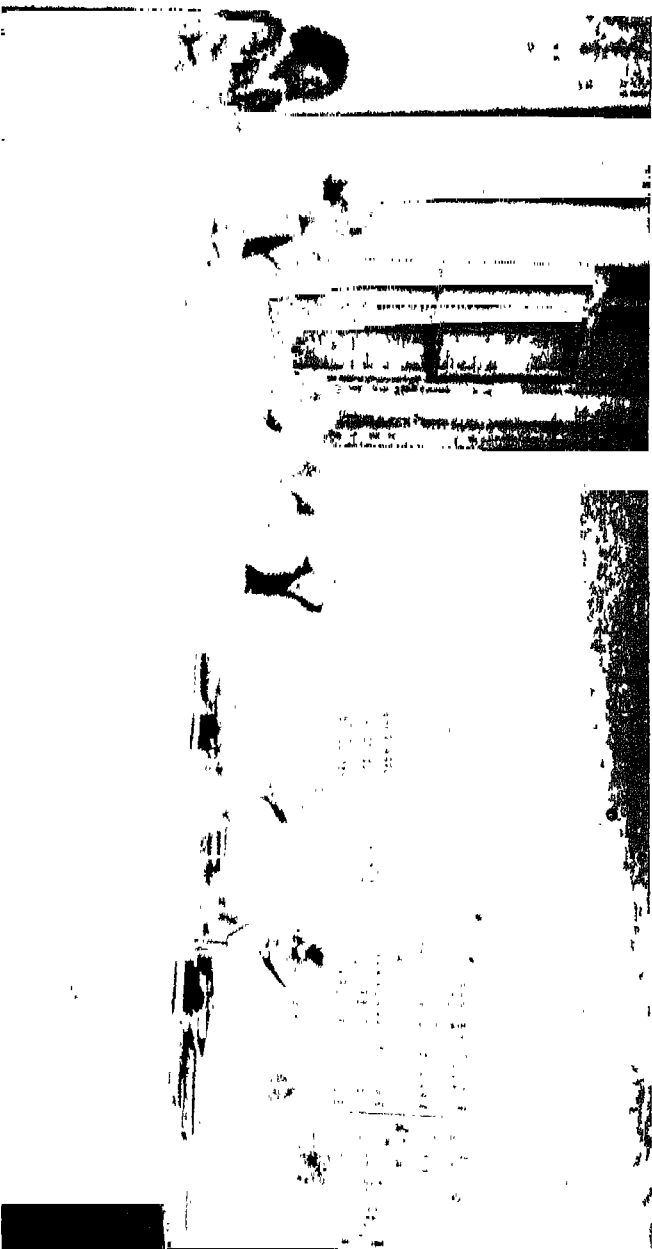
7 Delegates at a Womens' Conference in the Cultural Palace
of Emancipated Turkish Womanhood in Baku



8 Leila Mahmedbekova, the first Turkish Airwoman in Azerbaijan

o Conference of middle-aged Kolkhos (Collective Farm) Peasant Women in the Kabard-Balkan Repub.

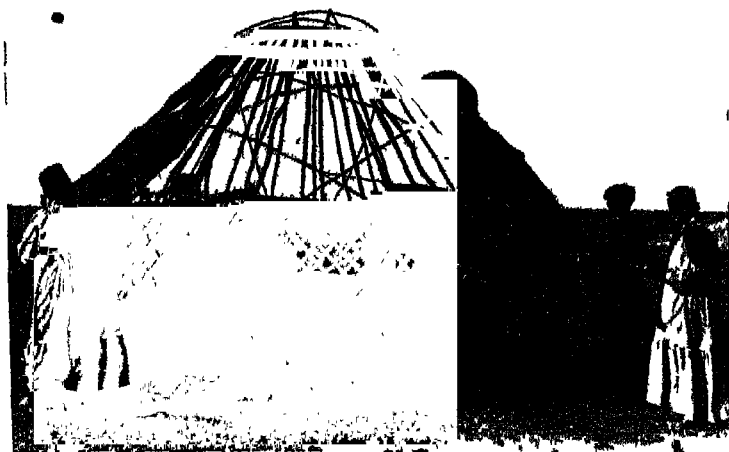




10 In the Director's Room at K u t v (Communist University of the Labouring East) in Moscow



11 Trek of nomad Kalmucks in the Caspian Steppes



12 Pitching a Kibitka (nomad tent) of the Kalmucks



13 Kalmuck Women at Work



14 Types of Kalmuck Womanhood



15. A. Nukhtat, the Churash-Russian Authoress



16. Kalmuck Women Students in Gala Dress



17. Summer Headquarters of the Nomads in the Highlands of Kazakhstan



18 A Delegate from Kazakhstan speaking at a Women's Conference in Catharine's Hall in the Great Kremlin Palace, Moscow



19 Kazakh Women on their Way to the Town to deliver Corn



20 In a Turkman Carpet-Making Cooperative



21 Turkman Landscape near Ashchabad



22 Turkman Wedding Cortège in the Desert



23 Jamal Natyrova, Chairwoman of a Turkmen Aul Council
near Ashkhabad, to whom a prize was awarded



24. Tajgul Shannuradova, Turkman Balдах Woman, a
Storm Worker in the Kojchos (Collective Farm)
Kasyl-Gynchik



25. Turkman Delegate at a Women's Conference at the
Microphone



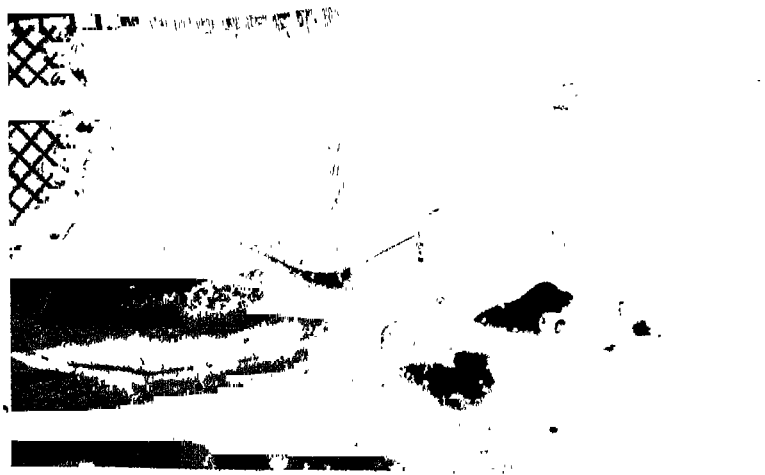
26. Enejan Geldiyeva, Chairwoman of the Executive Committee of the Farab District, (Turkmenistan)



27. Donyets, the Turkman Agricultural Expert, and the Chairwoman of a Kolkho's (Collective Farm) examining newly picked cotton



28. A Turkman Woman baking Flat Loaves



29. The Interior of a Turkman Yurta (Nomad Tent)



30. Sorting Cotton in Turkmenistan



31. Turkman Women in the silk-reeling Mill, Ashchabad



32. Crèche in a Turkman Kolkhoz near Merv



33. Men from a Turkman Kolkhos (Collective Farm) seeking legal
Advice from a Woman Official of the Cultural Yurta



34. Turkman Kolkhos (Collective Farm) Women, Delegates from the
Merv District



35. Tea-time in a Turkman Kolchos (Collective Farm) in the Oasis of Merv



36. Old Samarkand, general view from the air (Uzbekistan)



37. Uzbek Bride in a Paranja (Veil) taking leave of her Family



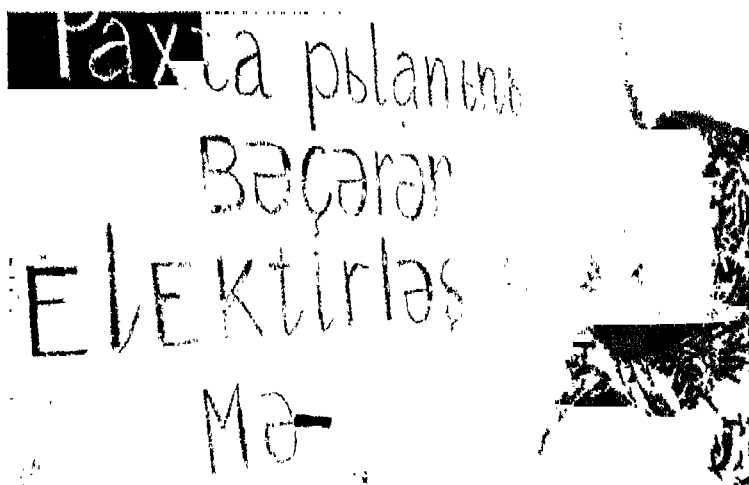
38. Registration of an Uzbek Marriage at the Sags (Registry Office) in Tashkent. The Bride in a Paranja



39. Mosque of Bibi-Khanum (Favourite wife of Tamburlaine) in Samarkand
(End of the 14th Century)



40. Old Bukhara, General View from the Air (Uzbekistan)



41. Pupils in a Cotton-Trade School at Feighana (Uzbekistan) writing with the new Latin Alphabet



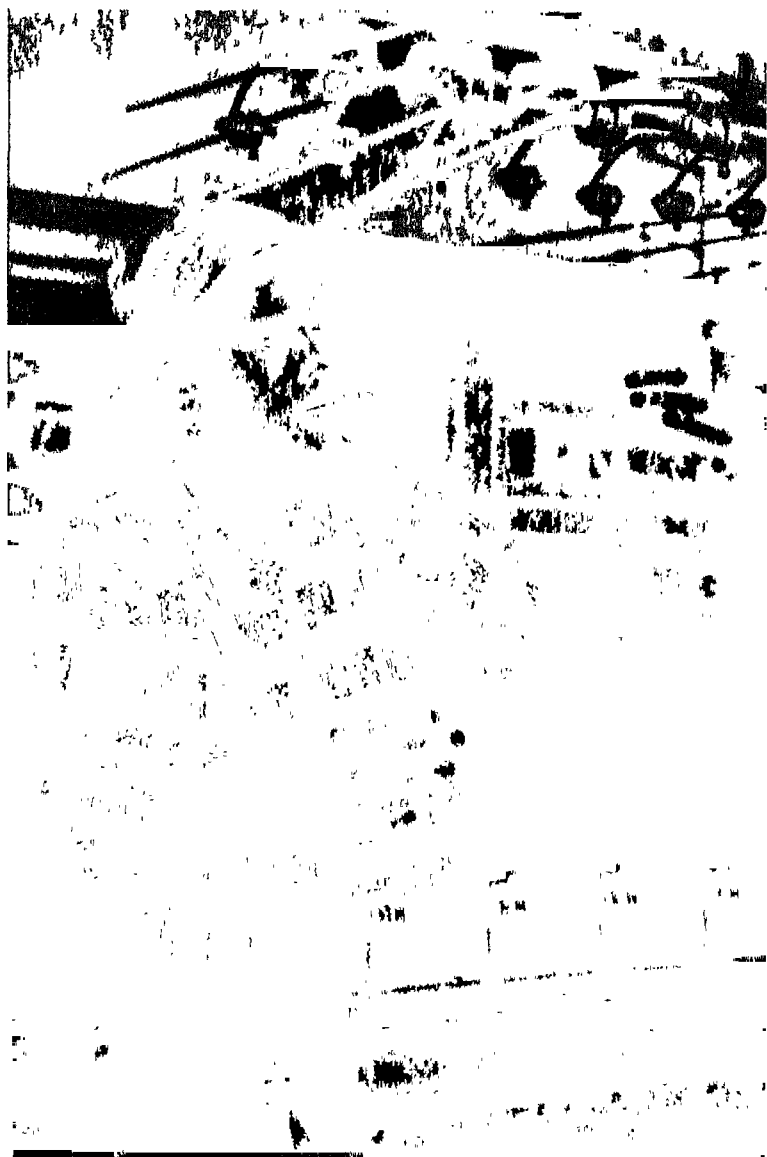
42. Uzbek Pioneer Girls on the Tennis Courts at Tashkent



45 First Meeting of Female Youth at Tashkent (Uzbekistan)



22 Meeting in a Kolkhoz (Collective Farm) near Bukhara conducted by an Uzbek Woman (Uzbekistan)



45 Woman Worker in a Cotton-Reeling Mill at Samarkand (Uzbekistan)



46 »Activist« in Old-Bukhara, one of the first Uzbek Women to discard the Paranja



47 The Uzbek Poetess, Ailyn



48 Tajikhan Shadyeva, Member of the Executive Committee of the Federal Republic of Uzbekistan



49 Uzbek Kolihs (Collective Farm) girl from Khochand, the best dancer at the Central Asiatic Olympiade



40. Taddarova an Uebel Laboratory Assistant to whom a Prize was awarded



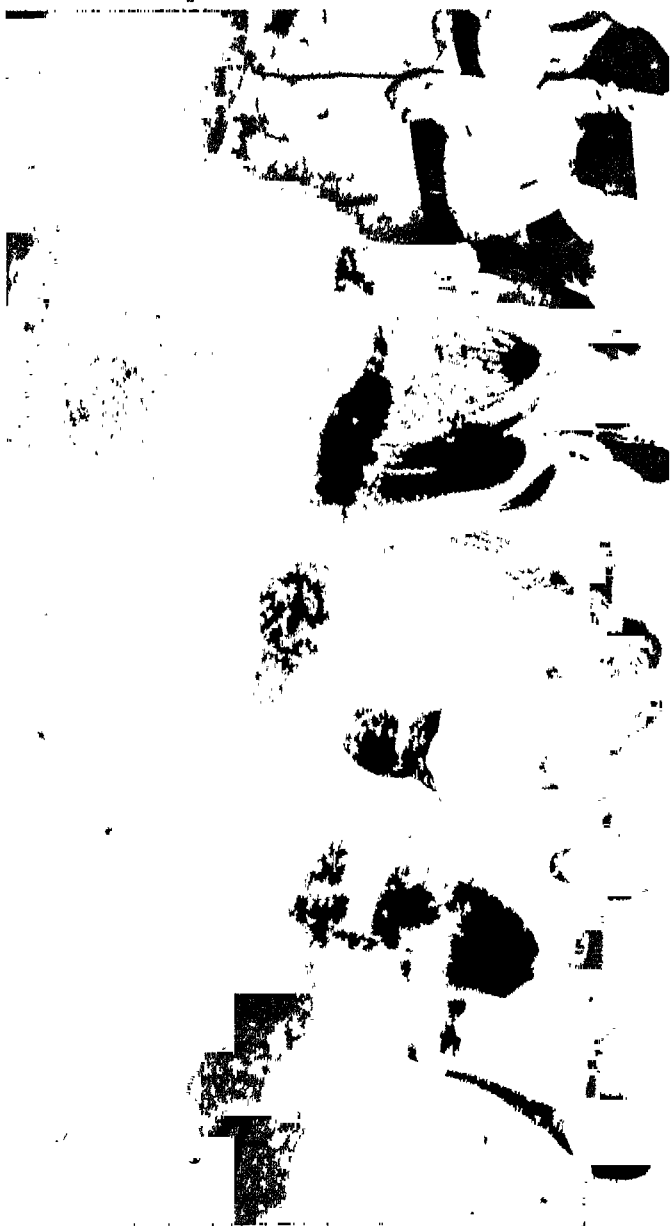
51. Uebel Woman Student after her first Flight



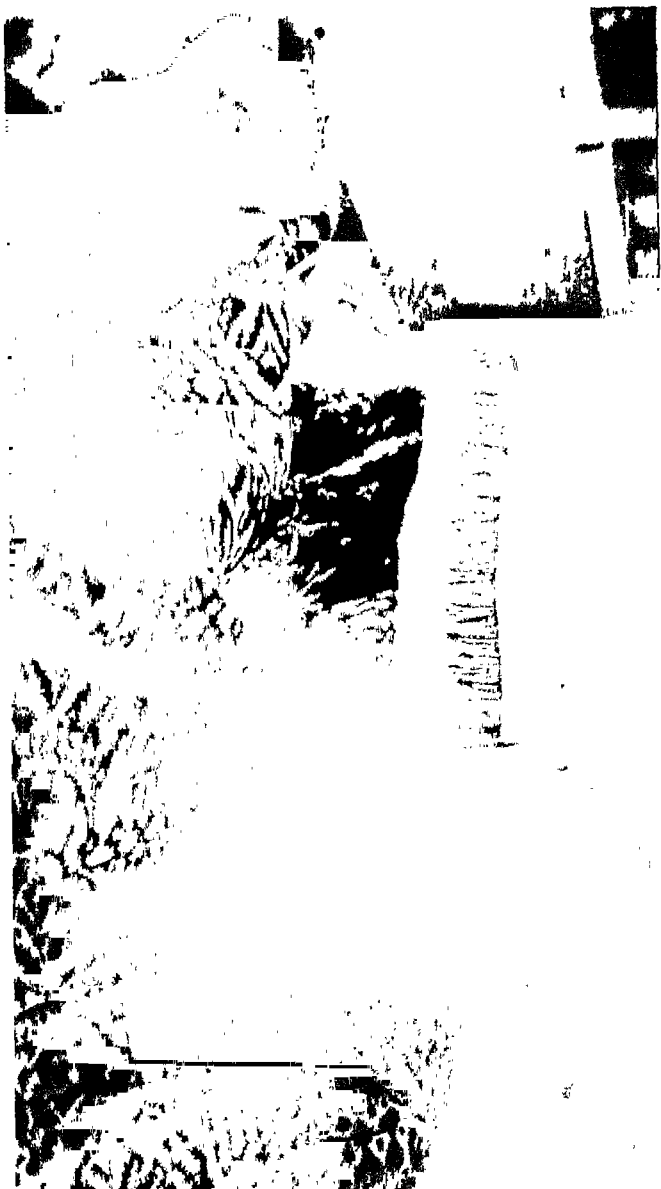
52 Tamara Khanum, the famous Dancer at the National Opera House in Tashkent with her Daughter Lola (Star Dancer in the Children's Theatre)



55. Doshakhan Abidova, City Manageress (Mayorress) of Tashkent, Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Federal Republic of Uzbekistan



54. Dershakhan Abidova and A. Aksemitovich (formerly Directress of the Women's Section of the Central Asiatic Bureau in Tashkent) examine the Cotton at a Kolchos



25 Beneath, the Sandal (Common coverlet over the basin of coals that are always kept glowing) in Uzbekistan



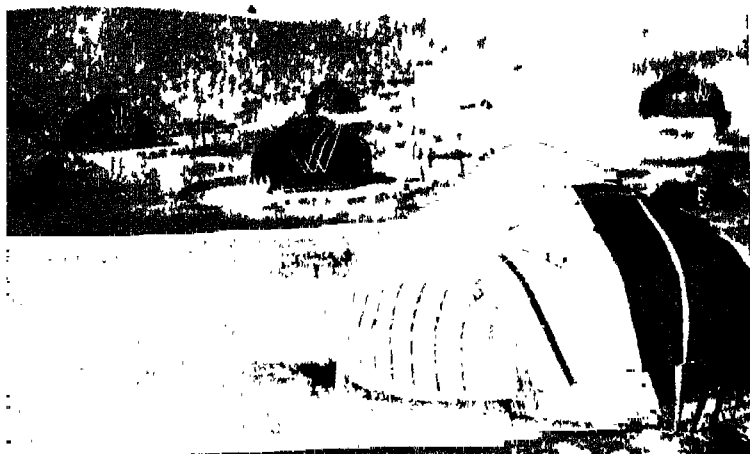
56 Tamar Khanum dancing an Uzbek national Dance



57 Murbayeva, the first Uzbek Woman Parachutist at the Aerodrome in Tashkent



58 Waterfall on the »Roof of the World« in the Western Pamir (Tajikistan)



59 Summer Yurtas (nomad tents) in Tajikistan

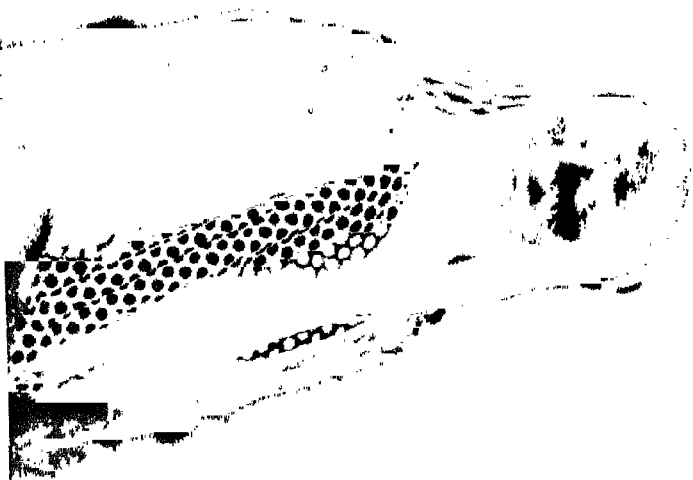


60 Tajik Mountaineer Women in a School for the Liquidation of Illiteracy



61. Kolkhos (Collective Farm) Women from a Mountain Ravine in Tajikistan in front of their School for the Liquidation of Illiteracy

52 A Woman Student from Tajikistan



65 Mamalchat Nakhanganova, the 15-year-old Tajik Pioneer girl, speaking at a Meeting of the T s i k of the U S S R





64. Hamida Begaliyeva, a Kirghiz Woman Storm-Worker, who won a prize in the Concrete Works at Frunze (Kirghiz Republic)



65. Fatima Bekishyeva, deputy manageress of a State Trust in the Kirghiz Republic



65 Arhustseva Medi, the Uroite (Altian) Manageress of
a Kojikhos (collective Farm) in Uroita
(Southern Siberia)



67 Alma Kassurgasheva, the Uroite Lecturer on
Japanese Economic History in Moscow



68. Ilyin and Khaltagarova, actors at the Buriat Mongol Theatre, in the play "The Road of Victory"



69 Uioe (Altian) Women learning to use a Sewing-Machine



70 Kutayeva, the Karagass Organizer of a Women's Section in the Ssayan Mountains (Southern Siberia)



71 A Settlement in the Far North of Asia



72. Apitka, the Nentsin (Samoyede) Chairwoman
of a Tundra-Soviet



73. Boyarkovskaya, the Evenk (Tungus) Student at the Leningrad Institute of
the Peoples of the North, in the Sculptors' Studio

